THREE ASPECTS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

EMILE VANDERVELDE

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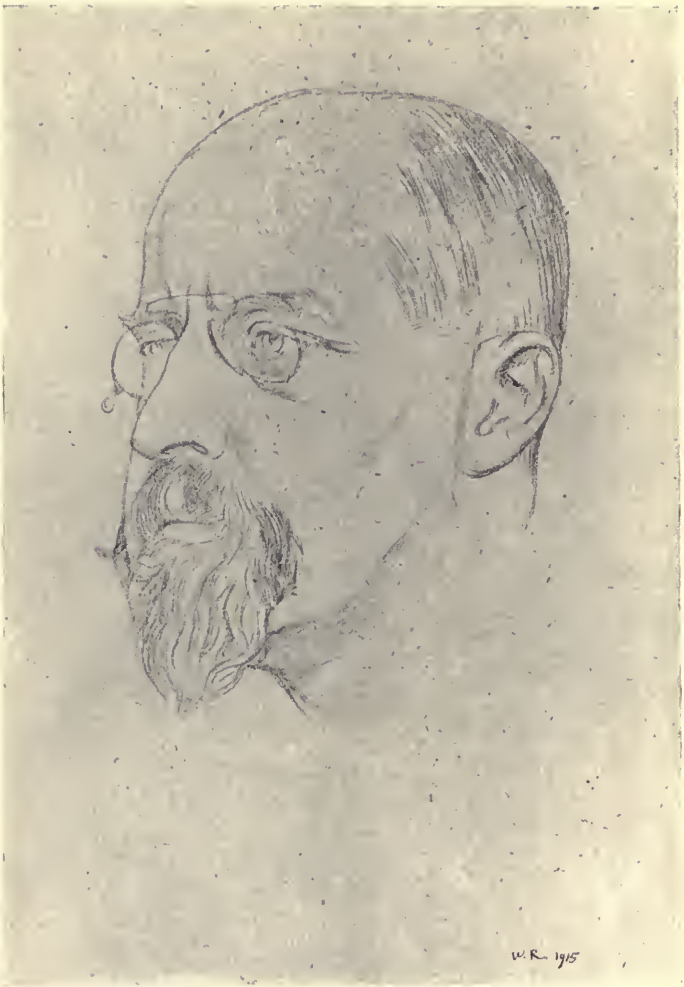

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THREE ASPECTS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

BY

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FOREWORD

I HAVE endeavoured in this little book to give a description of our mission to Russia, when Louis de Brouckère, Henri de Man and myself went to carry to the Russian Revolution the greeting of the Belgian Labour Party and to discuss with our comrades of Petrograd the question of the International Conference at Stockholm.

Leaving London on the 6th of May 1917, we reached Petrograd on the 18th of May, stopping three days on our way at Stockholm. We remained there until the 5th of June, except for a brief visit which two of us paid to Moscow. Afterwards, on the invitation of General Alexeieff, we spent a fortnight at the front, going thereafter to Roumania, returning to Petrograd on the 24th of June, and leaving for Le Havre, viâ Stockholm, on the 25th of June.

The five weeks that the Belgian Socialist Mission spent in Russia allowed of our seeing much and questioning many persons. We visited the Workmen's and Soldiers' Committees, as well as the Ministers, Socialists as well as "Cadets." We met the representatives of all the different political opinions from Polish nationalists to the anarchists installed in the Villa Dournovo. In Petrograd, as in Moscow and Kieff, we saw the Labour Organizations, interviewed members of the Belgian colony and the leaders of Employers Associations. We came into contact with the masses—we must have spoken to at least a hundred thousand persons—as well as their leaders. We listened to the pessimists as well as to the optimists. We had an opportunity of observing the enormous difficulties existing in Russia to-day. But we never lost sight of the many reasons that, in spite of everything, justified young democratic Russia's belief in her future.

We share this belief and we give our reasons hereafter.

My thanks are due to my two collaborators, Louis de Brouckère and Lieutenant

de Man, who have permitted of my giving in this one volume three aspects of the Russian Revolution. I thank, too, my translator, Miss J. E. H. Findlay, whose co-operation permits of my offering this book to the British public.

EMILE VANDERVELDE.

THREE ASPECTS OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

CHAPTER I

THE REVOLUTION AT PETROGRAD

WE set sail on the 7th of May 1917 from a Scottish port, bound for Russia viâ Bergen and Stockholm, and immediately we seemed to come into touch with the Russian Revolution.

There were on board representatives from all the great allied nations: six Japanese officers, a British military mission, French merchants, and a number of Russians returning from exile. The latter filled the cabins, crowded the smoking-room and the dining-room, overflowing even on to the deck, where many of them throughout that cold and rainy night of the North passed the long hours, their

lifebelts round their bodies, smoking innumerable cigarettes, and discussing peace and war, Lénin and Kerensky.

The friends that we found among them introduced us to two soldiers who were coming from the Champagne front, sent as delegates by their fellow-soldiers to the Soviet at Petrograd.

One of them was a Socialist, secretary to a Trade Union in pre-war days; the other, a book-keeper of peasant origin, had revolutionary tendencies, without being attached to any particular party.

They told us of their different experiences.

When the news of the Russian Revolution reached the western front, many soldiers in the Russian brigades mutinied and tried to assault their officers, but our two delegates interposed and succeeded in directing the movement on the right lines. Four delegates per company were elected, and together they chose a deputation to wait upon the Military Authorities. When the members of this deputation presented themselves at General Headquarters, they were threatened with arrest. "You would

not find any one to arrest us," was their answer. They were told that if they did not obey instantly a French Army Division was ready to march against them. "The French are too intelligent to do any such thing," they replied. And no doubt there was little probability of the experiment being made, for ultimately the organization of the soldiers was tacitly recognized. When the two delegates asked permission to go to Petrograd, the officer in command to whom they applied contented himself with replying: "Can you promise me that if I let you go I shall not be killed by my men in your absence?"

Judging by the information given us by these delegates—and we have every reason to believe that in the case of one of the two brigades at least what they said was true—discipline did not suffer greatly, and after this incident the *moral* of the troops was even better than before. When the Russian Revolution was announced on the Champagne front, the Russian soldiers said: "Now we are really going to fight the Germans." Or else: "Now if we are killed we can be assured

that our wives and children will not be destitute."

"After that," added the delegates, "is it not wrong to think in France that the Russians are planning a separate peace, which would dishonour the Revolution and deliver them up to the Central Empires?"

That was the keynote of much that we heard constantly expressed later on, even among the Zimmerwaldians, or the Extremists, or, at least, among such extremists as were not secret agents of Germany.

Certainly, among the travelling companions whom we met several days afterwards in the train between Stockholm and Petrograd, there were many revolutionaries who longed ardently for a separate peace "in order to be able," as Clémenceau says, "to give themselves up entirely to the joys of civil war." But however keen their pacifism, however impatient they were to conclude at any price a general peace, they were forced to admit that if the Russian Revolution concluded a separate peace, the Russian Revolution was lost.

Except on this point, however, it would

have been difficult to find anything in common between these exiles who were returning to their country after years of absence, some from Switzerland viâ Germany, others from France, Great Britain, and the United States : some of the latter—not all—were full of bitter resentment against the police surveillance of which they had been victims ; whilst many of the former were strongly imbued with lessons learned in the school of German Socialism.

During the three days that the journey from Stockholm to Petrograd lasted—with a break of twelve hours to allow of the passage of the ice on the Tornea, in the middle of May—we had occasion to exchange views with one of the Maximalists, who was soon after to become, along with Lénin, the leading spirit of the risings of Cronstadt and Petrograd : citizen Trotsky, to whom the Provisional Government had generously granted passports to enable him to come and combat it.

He was coming from Canada, with a group of supporters, full of rancour and rage against the British who had interned him at Halifax during several days ; against

such Socialists as ourselves, who believed in the necessity of carrying on the war; against Kerensky, against the Minimalists, against all those whom he accused of compromise with the *bourgeoisie* and of concessions to militarism and imperialism.

Scarcely had we crossed the Finnish frontier than we witnessed the beginning of his propaganda.

In the stations, full of soldiers in heavy khaki coats and their winter sheepskin caps, he improvised meetings; he spoke of Stockholm; he lauded the Revolution, proclaimed the duty of the International proletariat to put an end to the horrors of war at the earliest opportunity.

But this propaganda, which was stopped only by the signal for the train to start, was counteracted by another propaganda, not less active and not less prolix.

There were in the train more than three hundred Russian military doctors who had just been liberated after having been prisoners in Germany since the beginning of the war.

To the soldiers whom Trotsky was haranguing they told of the sufferings of

their fellow-countrymen, the martyrdom of two million men, a prey to famine and typhus, abandoned without medical aid, flogged, exposed to the heat of the sun for the smallest peccadillo; they had already seen three hundred thousand of their comrades die since the beginning of the war, and to support what they were saying they showed photographs, they read documents, and called upon their comrades in captivity to bear witness to the truth of all they said.

They were listened to and applauded, as the others had been listened to and applauded. But in these crowds, which seemed all eyes and ears, every one remained perfectly calm.

Even among the opponents—for often the two parties attacked each other—there was never a coarse word, not an evil-sounding expression, and we witnessed this tolerance, a little apathetic perhaps, with regard to all theories, this sociability and aptitude for living in a state of anarchy, that was one of the things that amazed us most during our sojourn in Russia.

Our train was due to arrive at Petrograd

on the third day in the evening. But we had to take into account the disorder of the transport service, and it was not till six o'clock in the morning that we steamed into the Finland station. Some Belgians, who had spent the night in the station, were waiting for us, carrying our national flag, whilst amidst a flourish of red flags, with pacifist inscriptions in white lettering on gold, some hundreds of Maximalists escorted Trotsky.

Immediately after we were taken to the Hôtel de l'Europe, where we were to be the guests of the Provisional Government.

Renan, in speaking of the French Revolution, said: "It would be absurd to try to impose our petty programmes of common-sense citizens on this extraordinary movement, so completely beyond our comprehension." And those who attempt already to pronounce judgment on the Russian Revolution would do well to reflect on this saying. Never was a revolution more radical and so rapid. From the time of the taking of La Bastille to the downfall of Louis XVI three years elapsed; between the abdication of the

Czar to the creation of the Russian Republic there were but three days. And during these three days not only Czarism, but the Douma, and the Zemtvos, and all the institutions more or less Liberal, which were the results of the movement of 1905, collapsed.

Our first visit on arriving at Petrograd was to the Tauride Palace, where the Soviet was sitting.

I had been there in June 1914, some weeks before the war. Maxim Kovalewsky, who died six months afterwards as a result of his captivity in Austria, had introduced me to President Rodzianko. I had signed the "Livre d'Or" immediately after the Dowager Empress, who had visited the Tauride Palace for the first time some days before. I had been photographed in the gardens—with Tscheidze, who is to-day President of the Soviet, with Skobeleff, now Minister of Labour, and with the four Socialist members of the Douma, who, to welcome me, had interrupted their discussions.

Even then, any one who visited Russia with his eyes open was bound to realize

that the opposition to the existing *régime* included all classes and parties, and that Czarism had no other support than its beneficiaries and its parasites. But who would have thought in that beautiful month of June, when all Europe seemed to be entering upon its summer vacation, that a world-war was imminent, and that three years later the Czar would be a prisoner and the red flag be flying over the Winter Palace and Peter and Paul, and that the Douma itself would be overthrown by the triumphant Revolution ?

In its place, since those May days, have been installed the members of the Workmen and Soldiers' Committee.

The great hall is empty, or it is only filled on special days, when the 2,500 delegates of the Soviet assemble to hold a general meeting. In the corridors, in the committee rooms, soldiers are sleeping, drinking tea, and supping a kind of porridge. It smacks of the guard-house and of the public kitchen. Albert Thomas, who is with us, says : " I begin to understand the Commune better." Sentries are every-

where with fixed bayonets and a red rosette in their buttonholes. The Revolution is well guarded. But our papers are in order, and we are taken in at once to the Executive Committee.

Tscheidze is presiding, with Skobeleff beside him. We recognize some other friends whom we have met before in this same Tauride Palace or at the International Congresses. But how many new figures there are! Siberia has given up her exiles. The Revolutionary emigration has come back to its own. Amongst the members of the Executive Committee, moreover, all are not Russians. Without mentioning the Jews, who are very numerous, Mme. Kolontay, sitting among the Léninists, is Finnish. And there is Rakowski, too, the Socialist leader of Roumania: one never knows exactly whether he is Roumanian or Bulgarian. He had been sent to prison by the Government at Jassy, and set free by Russian soldiers! From this cosmopolitan assembly we receive a cordial but reserved welcome. They applaud, however, when Albert Thomas announces that in France the Socialists are inaugurating a

campaign for a policy inspired by the principles of the new Russia.

We, in our turn, offer them the congratulations of the Belgian workmen on the Revolution. We begin to notice at the same time what we have in common and what divides us. Stockholm is discussed, and we formulate our objections and reluctance; we point out the danger and the uselessness of a meeting with the German Socialists. But definite positions seem to have been taken on either side. We exchange notes, however, and fix further meetings.

Meantime, we intend to get into touch not with the leaders this time, but with the masses.

At the Tschinizelli Circus the sailors from the Black Sea, who from the first day have been the fervent apostles of an armed Revolution, had organized a political mass meeting. There were present, besides the Belgian delegates, who received a formidable ovation, the Ambassador of the United States, the heads of the military missions of France and Great Britain, the Ministers of Roumania and Servia. The last named

was concluding his speech, when there was a movement among these thousands of men, and attention was suddenly fixed on a figure that was entering. The audience rose as a man, and applause rang out as before the formerly imperial tribune a man appeared, dressed in the khaki uniform of a simple soldier: it was Kerensky.

The man who three months hence was to say to the Congress of Moscow, "You owe obedience to a supreme power and to me, who am at its head," is a young man about thirty-four years of age, of a pale, delicate appearance. He is said to be seriously ill, and in forcing himself to perform so great a task to be giving his life to the Revolution. That is perhaps one of the secrets of the influence which he wields over the Revolution. He could not be called eloquent; he has not the fire of a Jaurès nor the power of subtle argument of a Victor Adler. His voice is rough, and his delivery is without art. But he has in this delivery that mysterious magnetism which draws crowds and inspires martyrs.

We met Kerensky again soon afterwards in the Ministry of War, where he had just

been installed. A Grand Duke was waiting in the antechamber. The staff of the former *régime* was employed still there to show in the visitors. But where Soukhomlinoff, now in Peter and Paul, had lived, we found to-day with the new Minister, Madame Breschkowska, the grandmother of the Revolution, this wonderful old woman, who at eighty years of age, twenty years of which were spent in Siberia, had still the physical strength and moral courage to traverse this immense Russia, preaching the Revolution and inspiring others with the burning fire of her own passion.

When she heard that we were Belgians, and that we came as representatives of Belgian labour, she came towards us and embraced us in a maternal fashion.

We went away, moved and comforted by this interview. The ice was broken. We were really in touch with each other. We had felt the heart of the Russian Revolution beating in unison with our own, and during the three weeks that we spent in Petrograd this impression was deepened daily.

One must have lived through these early days of the uprising to understand the enthusiasm of the first weeks of a great Revolution.

Every Sunday, from morning until night, processions passed constantly, bearing flowers and wreaths of everlastings to the Champs de Mars, where the dead of the Revolution have been buried. On the Newsky Perspective or on the Novoïe Vremia, or even at the Crédit Lyonnais or the Bank of Siberia, the red flag was flying, and holiday crowds were gathering for the sole pleasure of fraternizing, purchasing books that even yesterday were forbidden them, and breathing the air of liberty. In the Conservatoire, in the House of the People, in the Imperial Theatres, concerts and lectures were always going on. The music was generally excellent, and thousands of auditors applauded, until late in the night, the leading orators of the Revolution.

It would have been difficult often to tell with whom the political sympathies of the assembly lay. Maximalists and Minimalists, Bolcheviks and Mencheviks, Léninists and Kerensky's supporters or partisans of Pleka-

noff, succeeded one another on the platform without their contradictory statements producing the slightest tumult, the least disorder.

Anywhere else, we venture to say—in London, Paris, or Brussels—such meetings would have been absolutely impossible, and would have ended either in the audience coming to blows or with their clamour drowning the voice of the speakers.

Here there was nothing of the sort. There was complete anarchy and absence of all authority, but liberty of speech was absolute. The Revolution policed itself with admirable impartiality.

Probably it will be pointed out that a few weeks afterwards these same crowds came into the streets, and that the anarchists of Petrograd went hand in hand with the insurgents of Cronstadt, that under pretext of expropriations evil-doers pillaged the shops, sacked the banks, and installed themselves in the villas and palaces that had been abandoned by the proprietors. But who can judge of the enormous exaggerations published on this subject in sensational newspapers in Paris

or London? And who can number the fantastic false reports that were being circulated even in Petrograd, when public opinion was strung up to concert-pitch and *La Pravda* (*Truth*), a Lénin newspaper, announced a manifestation?

One fine Sunday, for instance, they told us that the Republic of Cronstadt had opened hostilities, that a Bolchevik warship was in the maritime canal about seven versts from the capital, and that shells of large calibre were already bursting in the suburbs. "I have seen them explode," a fellow-countryman told us. "They are firing on a munition depot." Information from a sounder source revealed the fact that there was no warship in the canal; that all was quiet at Cronstadt, but that a purely accidental fire had broken out in a hayloft.

Some days afterwards there was a fresh alarm.

The Léninists had decided that their revolution, or at least an armed manifestation, should take place the next day at one o'clock. The procession was to start from the Finland station. Anarchists installed

in the Villa Dournovo had promised their support. There were more than ten thousand of them, and they had twelve heavy guns !

At the appointed hour we went to see what was taking place. Everything was calm in the Finland suburb. Peaceful citizens were walking about, reading the manifesto of the Provisional Government inviting all loyal citizens to remain at home. We then went to the Villa Dournovo, the headquarters of the anarchists. There were no guns. There were not ten thousand men, there were only about thirty-five people at the most, and the wild anarchists invited us most cordially to come in and have a cup of tea.

In short, during the three months that followed the Revolution, and during which there was not one policeman, not one gendarme, not even a Cossack, at Petrograd, nothing but a volunteer militia, without weapons or authority, we do not think it is an exaggeration to say that in that city of over two million men, where crowds were standing in long queues waiting to obtain a morsel of black bread, there was

not more crime, more wrongdoing, more disorder than in the well-guarded capitals of Western Europe.

To whom or to what is the credit due for this calm, for this relative tranquillity, this almost peaceful development of the most subversive revolution that the world has ever known ?

Surely, in the first instance, to the character of the Russian people. In Russia the man of the people, *when he is sober*, is infinitely more peaceful, more docile, more sociable in a word, than the workman or peasant of our own countries.

But he must be sober.

In 1905, when vodka was to be had at every street-corner, when the rebels began by pillaging the alcohol stores in many towns, frightful scenes of bestiality took place, such as, for instance, the butcheries of Kischineff and the massacres of Odessa and the industrial centres of the Caspian Sea. If it has been otherwise this time, it is because the Revolution of 1917 has been a *dry* Revolution.

Assuredly, while prohibition is general, it is not absolute. Though one cannot

buy alcohol, it is not forbidden to have it in one's possession, and when one is willing to pay the price, in certain restaurants, contraband champagne may be purchased at sixty roubles per bottle.

A moujik, who has procured some raw spirit somewhere, may be seen occasionally in the streets abominably drunk. But that is the inevitable leakage of a system that is otherwise most strictly observed. Indeed, it is literally a fact that it is almost impossible to obtain in the cafés or restaurants not only whisky, but wine or beer. Only water is to be seen on the tables, or kwass —white, red, or black kwass—which is made by fermenting bread, and in which the degree of alcohol does not exceed 1 per cent., or at most 2 per cent. Total abstinence, consequently, is almost obligatory, and perhaps the leaders of the old regime, who have at least the merit of this radical reform, owe their lives to that fact.

We have so far noted some of the most obvious aspects, but also the most superficial, of the Revolution at Petrograd. It may be said that these impressions have nothing sensational in them.

Among the publicists of every nationality who were in Russia when we were there, many indeed did not seek to hide their disappointment; they had hoped to find in the Revolution a unique opportunity for obtaining good copy, and instead they were asking themselves every evening how to put together a hundred lines to send to their paper.

In short, the streets, apart from the red flags, the excessive dirt, and the trams laden with soldiers, had their usual aspect. Ministerial crises were neither more nor less frequent than in Paris. The very number of public meetings made them insipid in the end. On the surface Russian life seemed much the same as it had been before the Revolution: the staffs in the ministries were still at their posts, and in this country, free henceforward in a sense that no other country in the world has ever been, we were reminded by the doorkeepers when we visited the Hermitage Museum that we must remove our hats.

To understand really the immense and chaotic transformation that was taking place in the minds of the people and in

the very conditions of life, it was not enough to look at the scenes in the streets; one had to talk with the people, to come into contact with the different groups, to go elsewhere than Petrograd, to visit the Russian armies and the factories.

We had only two months to do all that in. We made the attempt, however, by dividing up our party. Accompanied by Lieutenant de Man, I started for Moscow, where we arrived in the midst of the general strike of the dvorniks (janitors) and of the hotel staffs. M. de Brouckère devoted himself especially to visiting the factories. Together, on the invitation of General Alexeieff, we spent a fortnight with the armies of the South and the South-West, while during the whole of our sojourn we never ceased to carry on an active propaganda for Belgium and to hold meetings with the Soviet.

In the following chapters will be found some of the observations that we made from this triple point of view: industrial, military, and political.

CHAPTER II

THE REVOLUTION IN THE FACTORIES

THE general impression received from a round of visits to the factories of Petrograd—the only ones that we had the opportunity of seeing—cannot but be somewhat vague and uncertain.

Innumerable conflicting forces are at work; probably their efforts will blend some day, but at present they are contradicting and counteracting each other. The action of some will only be momentary, while that of others will probably be durable. But how can we distinguish which are lasting and which transitory? What appears to be lasting to-day, to-morrow may be neutralized or completely annihilated by some other influence. Or else it may adapt itself to new laws and become fecund when we had thought it destructive. Some other force, the influence of which

may be scarcely apparent at the time, may develop powerfully in the near future, and favourable or fatal consequences be the result. How can we attempt to deliver judgment in this formidable chaos from which a world will emerge ? What do we know ? What can we affirm ?

We must wait and think, and compare events as they develop with our first impressions. . . .

But since necessity compels us to deal with this matter in these early days, we have but one resource, and that is to speak conditionally, always with a reservation, warning our readers that our statements are necessarily precarious and our conclusions uncertain.

1. The Industrial Youth of Russia.

Russia will always be an essentially agricultural country. Nearly 85 per cent. of its inhabitants live by the cultivation of the soil or of the forests. But we must not conclude from that that the country is in its commercial infancy. Nor must we picture the typical Russian workman

as a kind of village blacksmith or a shoemaker in a little town. He is, on the contrary, a workman in great, even ultra-modern, factories. The giant factory predominates, and its plant is often up to date. Factories employing more than one thousand workmen represent a larger proportion in Russia than even in the United States. This is easily explained by the youth and the rapid economical growth of the ancient Empire of the Czars. The needs of national manufacture date only from yesterday, but they are developing with surprising force and rapidity. The factories, being of recent date, are planned on the latest technical designs, and as they are justified in anticipating an immense and rapid development of their business, these plans are conceived on a very large scale. That is the case in all parts of the country where industries already exist, in the Donetz as in the petroleum district of the Caucasus, and even near Moscow, where the textile industry is relatively old. But it is in Petrograd especially that the phenomenon is the most striking. We might find in other parts of the world,

perhaps, more gigantic factories than the Poutiloff works, but nowhere, at least in the outskirts of any large capital, are there so imposing a number of enormous establishments, nor does there exist anywhere such a mass of workmen working in the interests of a mere handful of employers.

Were this statement but of technical interest, we should not insist on it, but we cannot blind ourselves to the gravity of its social influence. In the large Russian cities the classic conditions which accentuate the conflict of the classes and tend to aggravate it are present in their most acute form: vast agglomerations where revolutionary ideas foment; overcrowding of the population in the great works where physical contact, and still more, the community of work and suffering, make them conscious of their grievances and of their own strength; the contrast between the large numbers of those who obey and the small number of those who command.

Nor is that all. The population of the Petrograd factories is not a population of habitual town-dwellers, adapted to this

city life that they are leading. They are peasants who have only recently left the country. This situation has been still further aggravated by the war, contrary to what has taken place elsewhere; indeed, most of the skilled workmen of long standing have been taken away from their usual work and requisitioned for artillery regiments or other special army work, of which they form the *élite*, as remarkable for their technical ability as for their splendid *moral*. But their place has been filled in the works by fresh contingents of peasants, who are now in an overwhelming majority. They arrive from all parts of the country, and especially from the villages near the big towns. They are of all races and of all civilizations. Next to a Finn we find a Tartar. They have been taken out of their proper environment, and there we see them uprooted, with no common traditions, without that restraint that custom brings. They have no sense of political liberty, since absolutism has prevented their acquiring it. They have but a rudimentary knowledge of political organization, their Trades Unions having before the war

enjoyed a very precarious liberty, powerless to establish themselves on a solid basis.

That will give the reader some idea of the truly extraordinary quantity of explosive material thus massed together.

* * * * *

Does that mean that Russia is on the eve of this "social revolution" foretold by the theorists of Socialism? That would mean that we take a singularly superficial view of the case. A "labour" revolution would necessitate positive, constructive conditions; it would require a political and industrial capacity of which the urban proletariat of Russia has not given any proof so far, and which cannot be acquired in a day. The future of the country seems, moreover, likely to be determined rather by its agricultural situation, which directly interests the immense majority of its inhabitants, than by the state of its industry. It is, after all, the peasant who remains the real master of the situation.

Do we mean to say, then, on the other hand, that the material accumulated must

inevitably explode, and that we are on the eve of a formidable conflagration, one of those social upheavals that convulse and devastate a country? We must certainly be possessed of singular optimism if we can cast such a hypothesis disdainfully aside. But it would be equally rash to decide that the explosion is inevitable. Russia is manifestly exposed to a very grave industrial crisis, but it appears far from impossible to deal with it.

We wished to see the Petrograd workmen in their factories, where they spend the greater part of their laborious existence. We talked long with them, and conversed also with their leaders and organizers; we were present at their meetings and took part in their discussions, and the result of our inquiries, which were as comprehensive as circumstances and the lack of time at our disposal would permit, has been that we have carried away a very distinct impression of the extreme good-will on the part of the most intelligent and the most technically skilled members of the working classes. As far as the masses are concerned, they show a very deep "social

sense," which only needs fuller development. If the employers on their side are able, as one hopes they will be, to rise to a sense of their responsibilities, if the Government, that we may confidently expect to introduce many new measures, acts with wise and far-sighted energy, Russia will come victoriously through her present trials and set a great and beneficial example to the world.

2. The Claims of the Workmen.

It was neither his rate of pay nor the conditions under which he works that led the Russian workman to engage in the present revolutionary movement. The Revolution was from the first political, in the strictest sense of the word. It was directed against Czarism. Its aim was to win liberty. If any material consideration was mixed in it, it was at most a protest against famine that resulted from the bad organization of transport. We know, indeed, that the protests of women obliged to wait in queues during whole nights before the doors of the bakers, and the

manifestations organized in the factories to support their claims were the immediate cause of the events that followed.

During the first days of the new era, in the intoxication of victory, the putting forward of economic claims was scarcely thought of. A Belgian employer told us that he had at once assembled his numerous staff to propose to them that a common agreement on certain points should be drawn up, on the basis of which they would eventually proceed to a revision of the scale of wages which the high cost of living had rendered necessary. But his staff had stopped him before he had well begun his speech, protesting that there could be no question of discussing such a matter, that since the Revolution all were brothers, and they only asked leave to do for their brother what they had heretofore done for their employer.

Nevertheless, Russian workmen were not long in arriving at a somewhat less idyllic conception of the social question. During the early days after the Revolution the workman was still in the streets, or if he happened by chance to go to his factory

it was to take part in some meeting or to celebrate the triumph of the people's cause. Only when calm was in a sense re-established did he think seriously of resuming his regular work. But with the drudgery of daily toil he became conscious once more of his sufferings, of the weariness and the monotony of the long hours of work, the disgust for a life characterized both by the meagre pay and the constant irritation caused by the overseers and foremen, and with the renewed consciousness of his grievances there inevitably arose the will to end them.

Now one must not forget that the workmen in the factories were at that moment the masters of Russia; they were so in the full force of the term. The Soviet, which represented them as well as the soldiers, constituted the only political power capable of making itself felt in the country, for they alone had power at their disposal. They had their militia; they were closely associated with the soldiers; and especially they had cohesion and capacity for co-ordination. There were neither police nor armed guard of any kind;

there was not even any regular authority or recognized moral authority, not even an existing traditional authority to oppose their will. Everything, in short, was in their hands. Can we be surprised that they sometimes abused their momentary power? If we will but reflect and take into consideration all the circumstances, we shall be astonished that they did not abuse it more often.

For taken all in all, the exaggerated claims, the acts of violence against employers and overseers, have been less numerous and much less serious than scared newspaper reporters would lead the public to believe. They have in any case been much less numerous than they would have probably been in any other country under the same circumstances.

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From the first there was keen discussion among the theorists of the movement as to the category in which the Revolution then just commencing should be placed. Was it a democratic or a social revolution? They argued the point warmly, as if it were more important to baptize the movement

than to carry it on. Were the Revolution purely democratic, its domain was political, and it only indirectly affected the government of the factories. If it were social, on the other hand, it would have to settle the question of ownership, and it was the workmen's obvious duty to seize the factories. No one will be astonished, moreover, if we add that the workmen have never paid very much attention to such distinctions. They have certainly not limited themselves to making it purely political, but neither have they made themselves masters of the factories by appropriating them. They have simply exercised a practical authority. They have made their will predominate, a will which circumstances rendered irresistible.

The history of the labour hegemony in the workshops is full of curious incidents, some of them amusing, some tragic. We give one or two of the most characteristic, but as we fully realize the gravity and importance of the event with which we are dealing, after having described one or two picturesque incidents we shall pass on to a study of the deeper side of the question.

3. The Question of Overseers.

It was against the overseers and the foremen that the workman first made use of his newly acquired power. The duties of an overseer are as thankless as those of a non-commissioned officer. The rigid discipline of the workshop, the inexorable punctuality, may be necessary for the carrying on of the work, but the enforcing of it is hardly pleasant, and the position of the man who must constantly remind the workmen of their duties is not to be envied. The overseer is rarely popular, even when he is just, and is heartily disliked when he is unjust, brutal, or when he abuses his power, which is very great, to benefit those who curry favour and make life impossible for such as refuse to sacrifice their manly dignity. Now this happens more frequently than one would think in every country, and no one will be surprised when we say that in Russia it was more frequent than in any other country, first because political and police tyranny favoured it, even invited it in a sense, for abuses of power in all forms were prevalent;

secondly, because in these more primitive surroundings, where highly technical capacity was rare among the workmen, the expert skilled overseer dominated the men under him more completely than in the factories of the West; and, finally, because a considerable proportion of overseers and foremen were foreigners—English, French, or Belgians—too often tempted in the *naïveté* of their national pride to look upon the Russian workmen as the representatives of an inferior humanity and to conduct themselves like the "civilizers" in the colonies.

There were therefore many "accounts to settle." Now the justice of the people is prompt. It is also liable to err. In many cases the innocent suffered with the guilty; many instances of private vengeance were settled on the pretext of public vengeance. Among those whose dead bodies were found hanged from some lamp-post or washed ashore by the waves of the Neva there were more than one assuredly who had in no sense merited the hate of which they were the victims.

But let us add that the cases of death,

or even serious injuries, were fairly rare. If we believed the tales of some scared fugitives from the factories, we would imagine there must have been throughout Russia a veritable St. Bartholomew of overseers and managers, but we have already pointed out how rumour exaggerated to the point of ridicule even the smallest street brawls. We were told, for instance, that in a certain part of the Donetz thousands of victims had been slain. On making inquiry we learned that nearly all these supposed dead were still alive, and the real number of those murdered was something like eight or ten. It is difficult, even to-day, to give any accurate figure of the number of victims in Petrograd. There are many persons who have disappeared, but there is every reason to believe that most of these will turn up again when the present unrest has calmed down and they dare come out from their hiding-places.

It would prove our ignorance of the Russian workman did we represent him as thirsting for the blood of his employers. On the contrary, he has limited himself

generally to giving those of whom he wished to get rid of the *concilium abeundi*, without other penalty for those who did not execute it with a good grace than that of being thrown out of the principal entrance, followed by a cheering crowd. A warning is added not to return, under penalty of more drastic measures.

In a number of cases the workshop staffs had recourse to the authority of the "Soviets" of workmen and soldiers to carry out their sentences of expulsion. The Soviet would pronounce sentence of banishment from the neighbourhood, or from the Government, and their militia saw that the sentence was carried out. This application of administrative exile, following on the workmen's claims, is not one of the least strange facts of the paradoxical situation created by the Revolution.

Let us hasten to add, moreover, that apart from these overseers exiled or driven away, or who had taken to flight, there is a considerable proportion—certainly much more than half—who have quietly continued carrying on their work. Those have, as a rule, been kept at their posts by the votes

of the workshop, and this popular investiture has generally increased their authority. In some cases the workmen had begun by appointing a new overseer, chosen from among their ranks, but after having made the experiment they have put back in his post the original official, and these reinstated overseers, because they have proved conclusively and practically their suitability for the post, are among those whose authority is now held in the greatest respect and the best obeyed.

The idea of the rotation of employment seems to be one of those which appeared especially attractive during the early days of the Revolution to the less intelligent portion of the working class. It seemed natural and just to them that each one should take his turn in performing the hard, disagreeable tasks, and that each also should take his turn at directing. Skilled engineers were obliged to spend long weeks at manual labour. In some of the Donetz mines all the office staffs, the managing director included, had to go down into the shafts and taste the joys of swinging a pick, while the miners, many of whom were quite

illiterate, sat gravely in the offices, occupied the directorial chairs, perched themselves on the high stools at the book-keeping desks or even grouped around the table of the Administrative Council. But here again experience soon taught these would-be reformers that to undertake the direction of the production it was not enough for a workman to sit in the director's chair. When the pay-sheets had to be drawn up, orders for material placed, or the output regulated, they realized that technical knowledge was not altogether useless, and very soon installed the former officials in their places.

4. The Decrease in Production.

Apart from these temporary victims, a great number of managers had, as we have seen, been driven away by the staff. They left without hope of return, or at least of an early return. And thus Russian industry was deprived of much competency, a loss all the greater since technical capacity was already more rare than in old industrial countries. Moreover, the mobilization for

special army services of a large number of skilled workmen had still further reduced the supply of skilled labour. The quality and quantity of the output could not but suffer. That is undoubtedly one of the causes of the decrease in industrial production of which the public has been so often informed in the Press. There are other causes, such as the ever-increasing lack of raw material, the transport difficulty, the impossibility of renewing or repairing worn-out machinery. But for the moment we shall only deal with the decrease in production resulting from the shortage of labour, which is supposed erroneously to be the chief cause.

Was there any real evidence of ill-will on the part of the work-hands? We have questioned many people on this subject, to obtain as accurate information as possible —industrials, engineers, officials, workmen. The replies, as one might expect, varied greatly. They were, however, much more favourable to the workmen than the rumours current in Petrograd would lead one to think, rumours emanating from persons who came into no actual contact

with the factories and who got their information from journalists who were spreading such information throughout the world's Press.

Cases of real downright, evident ill-will rarely occurred. We mean by that, that there were few cases of factories producing less because the workmen deliberately limited the output. Large employers of labour have told us, on the contrary, that in the main the workmen are better disposed to-day than they were before the Revolution to help in the national defence by making every effort to increase their output.

But good-will on the part of the workmen does not count for much in a question of industrial production unless it is combined with perseverance, and whatever may be the good qualities of the Russian, perseverance has never been among the most striking. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The needs of the army and of the nation have been made plain to them, they understand the necessity for increased production if they would save their country, and they set to work with unaccustomed

zeal, but one or two hours afterwards the opportunity for a discussion with some comrades arises, or for a manifestation in favour of the Revolution; in a word, the opportunity to waste time agreeably. Perhaps the first time the temptation is successfully resisted, perhaps even the second time, but it is not easy to go on resisting all the time, the more so as the authority of the overseer is no longer there to call them to order, and because recent events have created a disturbing atmosphere of general excitement and opportunities for distraction have become greatly multiplied.

What most strikes the foreigner, who has an opportunity of observing what is taking place in Russian factories, is the enormous amount of time that is consecrated to or wasted in discussions. On the slightest pretext two workmen will lay down their tools to exchange views on the subject of Lénin's policy or the latest decision of the Soviet. Soon other workmen will stop to listen, or to put in a word, and one need not be surprised, on returning an hour later, to find the whole workshop engaged

in the controversy, with all the machinery stopped. It is not unusual, moreover, for the audience to be increased by men from other factories in the neighbourhood. It has been said that Russia has become the Kingdom of Speech, and nowhere assuredly is speech more honoured than in the factories.

Strange as it may seem, Russian employers make very little attempt to prevent this happening, much less than would be made in the same circumstances by their colleagues in the West. They seem to think the conduct of their employees quite natural in a way, and though they may not approve of it, they show, as a rule, less annoyance than one would expect. One of our party had occasion to remark this under rather amusing circumstances.

He had been asked to address the workmen of a large ironworks with a view to bringing home to them how important it was for Russia and the Revolution to maintain or, better still, increase its production, indispensable to the army. It had been arranged that the speech would be delivered at three o'clock, and that the

day shift, which would be replaced at that hour by the night shift, would be invited to attend. What was the speaker's surprise on arriving at the meeting-place at about a quarter to three to see the men of the day shift already waiting. The employer explained, without the slightest outward sign of annoyance, that to be quite sure not to miss the speaker's opening sentences the workmen had knocked off at 2.30.

The address was nearly ended, when towards 3.30 there was a commotion, and the men of the night shift, who, after having waited for the late-comers in the workshop, arrived to take part in the discussion. The employer, in the most unconcerned way, explained to the speaker what had taken place, and asked him to begin over again for the benefit of the new-comers.

Towards four o'clock the speech was concluded for the second time, but the audience did not disperse, and naturally the night shift did not return to work. This was because the most interesting part of the programme had just been reached, the speaker's replies to questions from the

audience. The questions were numerous and often very shrewd. In replying, the speaker insisted on the necessity for regular and sustained labour. The audience approved loudly and sincerely, but still did not go back to work. Towards five o'clock however, the speaker could not help remarking that it would be a good thing to give practical effect to the resolutions that had been passed by returning to work without further delay. Once more the audience acquiesced with enthusiasm, but asked the speaker to reply first to two or three more questions. That was done, and then followed another exhortation on the part of the speaker and another enthusiastic acquiescence by the audience, but on condition that he should reply to two or three more questions. It was getting on for six o'clock, and in the end the speaker firmly declared that he would reply to no more questions, that he would not take upon himself the responsibility for such a loss of time. "Why," said the employer in a tone of surprise, "another half-hour will not make much difference."

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Naturally it was during the early days of the Revolution that the loss of time in discussions, speeches, and workshop meetings was most considerable. As the enthusiasm died, more methodical work became possible, and the output increased. Regarding all those factories of Petrograd which we visited—and these were chosen among the largest—and in which we made the closest inquiries, we made the same observation; the output, which had diminished amazingly during the month of April, had increased during the month of May, often reaching a pre-Revolution level, and in many cases even exceeding it. The increase was general except in some rare cases, where causes, quite apart from the good-will of the workmen, such as the lack of raw material, prevented it. It is very striking to note that this increase took place especially in factories of skilled workmen. It was the technically skilled workmen who seemed to possess in the most eminent degree the moral qualities of the producer. Thus, in gun factories the skilled workers and polishers everywhere exceeded their pre-Revolution production in such a degree

that it became necessary to proceed to a redistribution of work.

It would be very interesting to give statistics in support of these general statements, but we must limit ourselves to stating that the facts were laid before us: statistics that could be of interest with regard to military operations are naturally not destined for public use.

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The "fatal result" of the eight-hour day, even of the six-hour day, on the Russian production has been strongly denounced. The six-hour day is nothing more nor less than an effort of the journalistic imagination. Nowhere has it been seriously put into practice, and in no important district, in no large industry, has it even been seriously considered. As for the eight-hour day its effect has not been in any way disastrous. Before the war, work was carried on generally in two shifts of ten hours each, and in many places two hours' overtime was added. To-day they are working three shifts of eight hours wherever they can procure sufficient hands and the raw material necessary for continuous production.

Where these conditions exist, it is obvious that three workmen working successively for eight hours each produce more than two workmen each working twelve hours. On the other hand, when the output is limited by the scarcity of raw material, the question of working hours loses its importance from the point of view of the intensification of industrial production. There remain the cases where labour is insufficient. These are more rare than one would imagine in this country, that has not mobilized, as those of the West have done, its whole valid population, and where there certainly remain great reserves of unemployed labour, notably female labour. But it is undoubtedly true that in certain cases skilled labour is difficult to obtain in sufficient supplies to permit of a third shift. Very often, therefore, in such cases they go back to the pre-war system of overtime. In two factories at least we were assured that even now, in spite of special technical difficulties, the workmen were producing as much in eight hours as they formerly did in ten.

But we must admit that this instance

was exceptional. And if, apart from those cases where skilled labour is rare, the system of the eight-hour day does not tend to diminish the total output of the country, it does diminish the output per man. It thus increases the net cost; and this brings us to the question of wages.

5. The Rise in Wages.

Wages have risen *considerably* since the Revolution, and no one would dare state that they will not rise yet more. Before the downfall of the Empire the best machinists in Petrograd often earned only four roubles; to-day they earn generally fifteen or sixteen.

But to appreciate this enormous increase we must not lose sight of the fact that there had been no important rise since the beginning of the war, with the result that the increase in the cost of labour, which in other countries has been spread over three years, has taken place within three weeks in Russia.

In Russia, as in the West, this is due principally to the increase in the cost of

living, which in the large cities and industrial centres has become incredibly high. It would be difficult to reckon it with the accuracy that the statistics of the Board of Trade permit us to obtain with regard to Great Britain. We do not know of the existence of any such document in the country we are discussing at present, but certain facts gleaned here and there allow us to give some idea of the enormous increase in the cost of living.

A Belgian workman who had lived in Russia for several years, who spoke the language perfectly, understood the customs, and was consequently not liable to be charged the fantastic prices that foreigners are sometimes made to pay, told us that he had paid two hundred roubles for a suit of very indifferent cloth to wear when off duty.

The price of coal has increased at least tenfold, thus making rents higher; for houses are generally let with heating included. When we consider the length and the severity of the Russian winter, we can easily understand the importance of this item.

Comfortably-off clerks in Petrograd, who before the war lived at the rate of two hundred roubles per month, have been obliged to practise many economies so as to manage to make ends meet with the six hundred and fifty roubles which they are spending to-day. We must remember that in all times of national crisis the cost of living increases much more in proportion as the mode of living is simpler.

In such conditions we can well believe that the workmen profited very naturally by the liberty they had achieved to demand an important rise in their wages. Unfortunately their claims in this respect, as one must expect on the part of a proletariat unaccustomed to economic negotiations, lacked co-ordination and therefore measure. The facility with which their first requests were granted incited them generally to ask more and more, and as employers, either from fear or weakness, or from some deeper motive, made but little objection to these demands, nor even troubled as a rule to discuss them seriously, it happened that certain categories of workmen increased

their demands until in the end they assumed fantastic proportions.

Certain characteristic instances were mentioned to us. Day labourers, for instance, employed in peat-cutting in a certain district in the centre of Russia claimed a fixed rate of pay of one thousand roubles per month; and again, the workmen in a large factory in Petrograd having in a few weeks trebled their wages, further exacted that the measure should have a retrospective effect, and date from the outbreak of the war.

The method employed by these workmen to induce their employers to accede to their requests is worth describing. One fine morning a delegation composed of thirteen members of workmen appeared before the administrative council, who had been summoned by means of a special and urgent letter written at the request of the staff, and who had hastened to attend. The delegation were the bearers of thirteen sacks. One man, speaking in the name of his comrades, pointed out that they were earning on an average eight roubles more than they did before the Revolution, and that consequently they had been daily

done out of such a sum in the past. There were five thousand workmen employed in the factory, so that meant that forty thousand roubles per day had been kept from them, in all twelve millions per year of three hundred working days, altogether thirty-six million roubles. The staff therefore asked the administrators to pay that sum into the treasury of the workmen's association, and they would undertake to distribute it. To facilitate the payment they left the thirteen sacks with the administrators, stating that the sacks were large enough to hold the amount either in gold or in banknotes, and they would come back for them the following day. Until then armed men would be on guard at the door, and would guarantee to the administrators that peacefulness and quiet which cannot fail to result from complete seclusion without interruption or communication from without. If, unfortunately, the sum should not be in the sacks at the appointed hour, the administrators would be placed in them themselves and the bags flung into the Neva, which flows conveniently near at hand.

One can easily imagine the consternation of the unfortunate administrative council at these simple words. They tried in vain to remonstrate, pointing out that the capital of the company was far below the sum required; that, in any case, they could not procure in twenty-four hours such an enormous ransom; and, finally, that if they were locked up they could not even take the preliminary steps necessary to obtain the sum. The reply was that the Company's safe was in the very room where they were sitting, that the directors had the key of it, and that, moreover, it was their business to deal with all financial matters. Then they were left to their own thoughts. Fortunately, however, they were able to inform the Ministry of Labour of their predicament. The Ministry had no material force at its disposal, and had the workmen persisted in their intention it is difficult to see how the Government could have prevented them from carrying out their plan. The Minister, however, assembled the delegates, and a few minutes' conversation sufficed to make them realize the absurdity of their demand and the impropriety of the

methods by which they intended to ensure its success. Promptly abandoning their project with as good will as they had worked for its realization, they went off to release their prisoners, explained the mistake that had occurred, offered them their excuses, and all went well from that moment, the cordial relationship existing between the management and the workmen not having suffered in the least by the incident.

The story of the thirteen administrators and the thirteen sacks is one that we heard repeated most frequently. It is made use of to point out the ferocity of the workmen and the insatiability of their demands. Does it not, on the contrary, show the simple, childish good-humour that the Russian workman keeps even in his excesses? A word was enough to make these terrible rebels give up all idea of the thirteen executions they had meditated. Moreover, had they contemplated it *seriously*? At the same time they gave up as readily their thirty-six million roubles, exacting no fraction of it even. Is that not a proof that by reasoning with them and exercising a little patience, without much difficulty

most of the foolish actions that are the accompaniment in Russia, as anywhere else, of the apprenticeship of liberty could be prevented? And since these same incidents are recounted over and over again, does it not show that they are much less numerous than pessimists would pretend?

In short, taking everything into account, it would be unfair to say that wages in Russia, at the level to which the Revolution has brought them, are too high. It is not true to say that they have determined the excessive cost of living. That had begun long before labour became dear, and has since become aggravated for reasons in many cases independent of this phenomenon. We did not find that anywhere in Russia the real wages paid were higher than in Great Britain; they were certainly lower than in America. The industry of the country, therefore, can bear them without suffering, on the condition that it is as productive as, for example, American industry. And as it disposes, as a rule, of very modern equipment, and as its concentration allows of the application

of the latest methods, there is no reason why an intensive output should not be achieved if Russian workmen are technically and morally educated up to it. It is therefore rather in the question of industrial education than in that of the reduction of wages that the economic future of the country seems to lie.

6. The Parliamentarization of the Factories.

Russian workmen had early to look to the question of regulating and organizing the new power that they had just acquired. Their first claims were out of all proportions. They were thereafter discussed by deliberative assemblies, and presented by chosen delegates. These were delegates elected by the workmen, and who were charged to supervise the carrying out or help in starting these reforms.

The result is a series of representative institutions, or small industrial parliaments. We know, moreover, that though Russia will be without a Central Parliament until the Constituent Assembly meets, she

presents, nevertheless, the most varied and wonderful collection of elective bodies, deliberating night and day, in all conceivable places and on all possible questions. There is a " Soviet " of officers and soldiers in each barracks, and in each unit at the front from a company to the group of armies. There is in every town a " Soviet " of workmen and soldiers. There is at least one congress of peasants representing in its turn thousands of local assemblies. There are Doumas in the towns and suburbs, not to mention the party congresses or the congresses of nationalities or professions. In short, the political life is, as it were, broken up, scattered in a veritable " dust of parliaments." How then could the factories stand aloof from the general movement ? They also have their deliberative assemblies. They have even more than one kind. It would be very difficult to enumerate all the various committees that have seen the day and to indicate in what way each one came into existence, its method of election, its composition, and its precise functions. We must keep on general lines. In most of the factories, then, there are :

(*a*) A FACTORY COMMITTEE.—It is elected by the universal suffrage of the workers of both sexes, without distinction of age or technical skill, and on the lines of the most absolute equality. It is elected either directly or indirectly; that is to say, by the intermediary of workshop committees, of which we shall speak presently. Its members may vary in number from a dozen in the small factories to fifty in the large ones. It meets generally during working hours. Its functions are complex; often it controls the whole activity of the establishment, but it does not pretend to direct it. It is not a council of administration; its rôle is rather like that of the Shareholders' Committee in a Limited Company: it supervises operations and states its views, not in the interest of the shareholders, but in that of the workmen. It is less interested in the financial results of production than in the conditions of work that it creates. The principal difference lies in the fact that the "recommendations" of the workmen are, under present conditions, much more imperious than those of the shareholders and that it is more

difficult to evade them. Moreover, the factory council is in a sense a court of appeal for questions of discipline, which are in the first instance the department of the workshop's committees. Often it "confirms" the nominations of the director, or even elects him. In most big works connected with the army or the navy its rights in this respect are fixed by definite ruling. Moreover, it exercises practical power, for should the council refuse to recognize a manager, life would become impossible for him in the factory.

The functions of the factory council are often absorbing. In many cases a considerable proportion of the working day is taken up by its meetings; sometimes even these meetings absorb the entire day. We know of a building yard in Petrograd, employing eight thousand hands, where the council, composed of forty-three workmen, naturally all skilled men and earning sixteen roubles per day, sits exactly eight hours per day, with the result that its members are never at their machines or their bench.

(*b*) Workshop Committees.—These are to be found in all important workshops.

The members are elected, as in the case of the factory committee, by universal suffrage. They exercise disciplinary power in place of the foreman. They have in general the exclusive right to hire, dismiss, admonish, and punish. The foreman exercises only a technical authority; moreover, he is often subject to the approval of the committee, or has even been elected by it.

(*c*) In many factories another committee is charged with classing the workmen as regards the wages—maximum, minimum, or average—to be paid them. Like all the others, this committee is elected by universal suffrage of the workmen, the employer being in no way specially represented in it.

(*d*) And lastly—and that is perhaps a farther departure from accepted customs—there exists in many places a factory committee of arbitration, to which disputes, individual or collective, between employers and workmen are finally submitted, which *is composed solely of delegates elected by the workmen.*

How does such a system work?

It would be ridiculous to say that it

works well. But unquestionably it works better—or less badly—than it would under the same conditions in no matter what part of the old industrial world. That most certainly is owing to the complete absence of ill-will, to that instinctive kindness, that astonishing aptitude for maintaining elementary order, that sense of spontaneous sociability, which are inborn in the Russian people.

These workshop committees, charged with keeping order, certainly do not take the employer's point of view—we do not even say that they take a reasonable point of view; but those who have seen them at work admit that they bring to the accomplishment of their task genuine good faith. Workmen guilty of some piece of carelessness are really summoned to appear before their committee. Punishments are inflicted on them to which they are astonishingly sensitive, and which often produce more effect than the fines formerly levied by the overseers. If, moreover, the delinquent is recalcitrant and does not mend his behaviour he is eventually dismissed from the workshop. Rarely is he sent away

brutally, but he is given to understand that he is a source of trouble to the committee, and employment is found for him outside the factory. In a machine factory employing upwards of two thousand workmen, the manager explained to us that workshop committees had thus led to the departure of about sixty undesirables, greatly for the good of the establishment, where now there reigns an atmosphere of peace and good-will. Even now the employers in general state that it is much easier to deal with the committees elected by the workmen than directly with the workmen, individually or in groups. The claims presented by the committees are generally less exacting than those of the delegation who have first submitted them, and when they are exaggerated it is generally easier to make them admit it.

It often happens that the committee is disavowed by the workmen, its resignation exacted, and thereafter they proceed to new elections. There is one such factory where, during the first weeks of the application of this system, the committee was renewed four times, but at each renewal

the newly elected committee, faced with the same problems, acquiring the same experience, came to the same conclusions, and agreed to the same concessions, until finally the workmen, realizing that a further change would be useless, agreed to leave the last committee in office and to follow their advice. They had no doubt come to see themselves that the committee were right.

7. The Responsibilities of Power.

In short, after a relatively short lapse of time business habits tend to develop in the most intelligent of the working class a more real sense of their responsibilities, and there is good reason to hope that with reciprocal good-will between employers and workmen Russia may escape the industrial chaos which threatened her, and that the necessary development of her economic system will be accomplished without catastrophe. Though in the early days of the new government we had reason to fear formidable strikes and monster lock-outs, which would indeed have thrown out of gear the whole social machine, it is rather

characteristic of the Russian that the wilful stopping of work in the factories has been very rare. There has been found nearly always at the eleventh hour some way of coming to an agreement and avoiding the cataclysm that seemed imminent, while every day that passes, every agreement that is concluded renders future agreements easier to accomplish. And it is not merely luck that has brought this about.

From agreement to agreement the present system will end undoubtedly by becoming organized and adapting itself to circumstances. Will it retain its chief characteristics, or will it altogether change its nature? In other words, will Russia achieve the parliamentarization of industry on a solid foundation? Will it be hers to herald the coming of this "workshop republic" dreamt of by certain social reformers?

Perhaps! We do not wish to bring to the examination of this question any Western prejudices which will not admit that things can ever be other than they have always been, and we are bound to notice certain analogies between the creation of

the committees arising out of the Russian Revolution and those whose creation is recommended by the British committee charged to study the problem of industrial reorganization after the war, and which consists of the most experienced employers and workmen. At the same time we must remember that there are certain fundamental principles that one can never transgress with impunity, either in the economic domain or in the political, one of the principal being expressed in the following words: " No authority without responsibility."

Now, though the responsibility of the factory or workshop committee to the workmen who elect them is genuine, it is null with regard to the other interested parties. It is difficult, therefore, to conceive that they can exercise full power, the more so since the workmen thus represented do not accept themselves the responsibility for the production, as they would do, for instance, in a co-operative organization. What would happen did it organize the production so as to diminish the output, or to alter the quality, or even increase the

cost of manufacture? We do not urge that the employers and the shareholders would suffer, though that consideration has its importance as long as the capitalist rule subsists and the owners of money play in national economics a part which, willing or unwilling, we must take into account. But we do urge that the consumer would suffer. Now the consumer is Mr. Everyone, and we can picture no system less democratic than that which would hand him over, bound hand and foot, to the sovereign will of the staff of each factory. Moreover, though one may profess to disdain this ethical consideration, we would soon find ourselves compelled to bow to economic fatality, this sanction of the rights of the consumer in the world of facts. Any industrial exploitation which did not supervise either the quality or the quantity, or the price of its production, would soon give way before the competition of better organized industry from without, and should any attempt be made to lessen the consequences of this by fiscal measures or by other Protectionist proceedings, it would lead to the paralysis of national production.

Who, then, would be foolish enough to think that one can bring about the emancipation of labour by a system which would stop the economic development of the country ?

We should indeed have expressed ourselves badly if we have led the reader to conclude from the foregoing remarks that we considered impossible, or even undesirable, the intervention of the workmen in the domain reserved up to the present to employers. We can make no more unfortunate mistake than to consider employers' functions as immovable and eternal. We should not dare to call ourselves Socialists did we not see in the total organization of labour by the workers themselves, for their profit, the aim in view. We are discussing just now only the question of what method to employ, and it must be admitted that the method which we have been criticizing at the moment has many grave objections. The working class, as a collective whole, can intervene in the industrial domain simply as organized consumers. Perhaps we shall have occasion to deal with this point later in connection with the co-oper-

ative movement. Even professionally, in its own industries, Western experience shows many examples of analogous intervention, but they have rarely achieved success unless they have taken into account the great principle of responsibility.

We could invoke, apart from co-operative production—properly speaking, where the employer disappears—the *commandite ouvrière*, where the workmen themselves assume the responsibility for the whole carrying out of the work, arranging its distribution among themselves, supervising and directing it, receiving from the employer the machinery and the raw material, and handing over to him the finished article, of which he limits himself to controlling the quality and the quantity. But in this *commandite ouvrière* the total cost of labour, the minimum output, the quality, the percentage of waste, and all the other important conditions are fixed by contract. The working collectivity is responsible for the carrying out of the contract, and if they wish to go in for speculation, they do so at their own risks.

We could still mention many industries where, under very diverse forms and in a varied degree, the workmen have obtained the right to choose their colleagues, but we must admit that the experience has, to a certain extent, been successful only when this right was given to a trade union; for in this case it is exercised, not under the control of the workmen of a single factory, but under the direction of the whole profession, represented by a powerful association, which has its traditions and its prestige to safeguard, and which would compromise the future of the work did it force the employment of incapable or lazy workmen. Here we would only draw attention to the great difference with regard to responsibility between the intervention of a trade union and the intervention of the working staff of the factory. We shall have occasion to refer to this again in the following pages.

8. Industrial Organization.

Russian workmen have tried for a long time to organize themselves industrially. They have had before them the example

of their comrades in all industrial countries. If it had not been for the constant persecution of the advocates of trade unionism by the former government, doubtless the Unions of Petrograd, of Moscow, and Donetz would have had a greater development, and would have formed a policy very similar to the Trade Unions in England, Germany, or the United States.

This is important. If it be true indeed that only the arbitrary intervention of the police of Tsardom prevented the development of the Trade Unions, and that the working classes acting freely might have created here, as well as elsewhere these great organs for the regulation of economic conflicts, that it might have followed in this matter, as it has done in the matter of co-operation, the tradition of the modern proletariat, we can hope now that having acquired their liberty of action the Russian working classes will again follow the path from which they were drastically and artificially turned aside and will proceed rapidly. There is no serious student of labour problems, no matter to what school he may belong, who does not rejoice because

the Trade Union favours the progress of the working class, while avoiding useless agitations. It does not certainly prevent the struggle between the classes in question, but it carries it along new lines, more orderly and decisive. We have no intention of writing the history of Russian Trade Unions. It has been dealt with very completely by several authors—as early as 1907 by Sbiatlevskié. Unfortunately it is impossible to-day to procure most of the publications concerning the heroic age of professional associations. On the other hand, no one seems to think (outside of the working classes occupied to-day with other work) of re-editing them, or at least selecting the important facts and publishing them in a new volume. We could wish all the same that the educated classes took more interest in a question which vitally concerns the country.

We shall only remind the reader that these professional Unions have had a former secret history that goes back a good way, and thereafter a public or semi-public history that begins with the Manifesto of October 17, 1905 (Old Style). From that

time they have no longer been legally forbidden, and we find them springing up like mushrooms after a night of rain, in all industrial centres. Soon persecution followed, with the counter-revolutionary reaction. In the course of the last twelve years the Trade Unions have been dissolved in large numbers every time that Russia has traversed a reactionary crisis, and we know that these have been sufficiently numerous. In the intervals they have been submitted to a system of police interference that rendered their activity practically nominal. Such an association, duly "authorized," for instance, found itself forbidden for whole years to hold a general assembly. On the other hand, one that numbered ten thousand members would be granted permission to hold an assembly on condition that all the members were convoked *individually*, thus creating almost unsurmountable practical difficulties. They were not authorized to elect a body of delegates for the administration of common interests.

The metallurgists' Trade Union at Petrograd had during the last decade ten presidents and ten committees, its leaders being

constantly imprisoned or exiled to Siberia. It has been dissolved five or six times. But in spite of that it has maintained its existence, and its members have kept in touch with each other even when the police suppressed the association. It has had a chequered career, dormant at times but never actually dead; it seemed impossible to destroy it because it answered a deep, elementary necessity, over which all the power of the Czar could not prevail. From the very beginning of the Revolution the organization has developed marvellously in the atmosphere of liberty. On May 1, 1917, it already numbered eighty thousand members; in the last phase of its legal existence in 1915, under the government of the Czars, it had only eight thousand.

The history of the metallurgists' Trade Union is that of all the others. All have experienced the same trials, and now have reached comparative prosperity. On May 1, 1917, round Petrograd alone there were sixty-one Trade Unions, of which more than half had been entirely reorganized and affiliated to a general Trade Union

federation, their total membership reaching more than 180,000.

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Thus, side by side with the factory committees, with which we have dealt in the foregoing pages, organizations of older date, founded on a different principle, owing their existence to the experience of the working classes of the world, and answering such a need that even the Czar's rule could not prevent their formation, are rapidly developing. They deal with the same questions, solve the same problems, intervene in the same conflicts as the committees. We shall study presently the connection between these two series of organisms, but before going any farther we would like to point out to the reader that they are really two different organizations, not only with regard to their outward form, but in their very essence.

A man obtains a right to vote for a workshop committee by the sole fact of being a worker in the factory, without having to make any choice, without engaging himself to any

adhesion, without any voluntary action. On the contrary, a worker is only admitted to membership of a Trade Union on his making the request and being elected, and on his agreeing to a determined course of action governed by fixed rules, the observing of a particular discipline; by consenting, in short, to the many responsibilities which this discipline entails, and of which the financial burdens are assuredly the least heavy. In a word, the member of a committee is simply in possession of a right; the member of a Trade Union pursues a definite aim, by constant, regular action, binding him to perform certain duties. The committee represents only the workmen of one factory, to the exclusion of all others. Whoever leaves one factory to go into another passes from the jurisdiction of one committee to that of a neighbouring committee. Even when the committees are federated they have none the less each a separate existence, and all their activities remain conditional to the particular factory for which they act. The Trade Union, on the contrary, groups, or endeavours to group, all the workmen of a collection of professions or

industries without any distinction between those who work for different employers or in different parts of the country. One of the most striking points of the Trade Unions in all countries is that tendency which leads them towards *centralization*. The organizations of specialists which were formed at the beginning of the Revolution have been replaced by organizations open to extremely wide categories of workmen in machinery shops—metal workers, wood workers, labourers, transport workers, for instance; in short, local associations are replaced by national organizations. Matters had progressed so far that before the war, in a country as large as Germany, more than two million workmen were grouped into only fifty-three Unions, and of these more than two-thirds belonged to the six largest organizations. The Trade Union has thus the tendency to represent the general interests of the working classes, or at least the many common interests of large bodies of these classes.

For the same reason it avoids excessive claims, extravagances to which the committees are much more exposed. What the Trade Union demands from one employer

it should be in a position to obtain from all the others. Experience teaches him that any amelioration of working conditions is not stable, and only merits being put into execution on condition that it can be generalized, and thus maintain the equality of employers in competition. "Undertake nothing that cannot become a universal rule of action" is the essential principle of practical Trade Unionism, the basis of the whole *moral*. The obligation to conform to the dictates of common sense, as shown by the complete and rapid downfall of associations that ignore this principle, is that not a form, and one of the most efficacious, of responsibility?

* * * * *

Since Trade Unions and committees differ from each other most profoundly, even to the pitch of representing two forms of organization opposed, indeed almost contradictory, must we conclude that these two institutions are bound to clash, and that eventually one will overpower the other? It seems much more probable that one will end by absorbing the other

in the course of an evolution which, while in a sense a conflict, will not necessarily have the character of an open combat.

Already we can notice clearly defined differences of opinion between their leaders. In the factories the members of the committees often belong to the Bolchevik party (Extremists); the Trade Union leaders in general hold more moderate views. And although the claims of the committees themselves may be generally less extreme than would be the claims of the workers in the factories did they act without intermediary, the Trade Unions, as they gain power, intervene constantly to advise the committees to act with prudence and moderation. One can note in this respect an essential difference between the attitude of the Labour Section of the Committee of Workmen and Soldiers, which can be considered to a certain extent like a federation of factory committees (although its members are elected by workmen directly) and that of the Federation of Trade Unions. It is very interesting to note that while the former continues to deal almost exclusively with the solution of

political problems in connection with the working classes, it is the latter that more and more deals with the purely economic problems. It is the latter, notably, that now organizes the representation of workmen on the committees of arbitration where employers are represented by the general association of the factory owners. The Labour section of the Soviet was to intervene in this matter according to the original plan, and as the council of arbitration seems destined to become one of the principal organs of the working class in the capital of Russia, we can see the importance of this change of function.

It is the same thing in the factories; there is already a marked tendency to subordinate the committee to the Trade Union. In some parts the members of the committees are chosen from among the members of the Trade Unions. In most of the factories the Trade Union members are in the majority. It is becoming more and more the rule that before acting they should consult the Trade Unionist authority. We can foresee that soon

they will be reduced to the rôle of the shop stewards in our Western workshops. It is true that even when the organization is powerful and well established it is not always easy to make these representatives of Trade Union authority in a particular establishment carry out the policy adopted by the association. The history of their rebellions and of the inconsidered and violent strikes which arose out of them form in all countries one of the most thrilling and, alas! one of the longest chapters of the history of labour. But in the end the general, moderating Trade Unionist idea prevails. In Russia, doubtless for a long time yet, the spirit of independence in the workshops will remain very marked, and Trade Union authority will be most precarious, but there is every reason to believe that in the end the latter will become stronger, and that matters will develop and finally be conducted pretty much as in the West.

9. Co-operative Organization.

Co-operative organizations have not had to suffer in the same degree as the Trade Unions from administrative and police interference. Thus their development has been more rapid and more intense. From 1896 associations of this sort were sufficiently numerous for the "general assembly of commerce and industry" of all Russia, which was held at Nijni-Novgorod, to be charged especially with examining the questions raised by their existence. After the Revolution of 1905 their growth was prodigious. They have to-day acquired a development which equals in many respects their development in some Western countries. The latest statistics that we have been able to obtain, that of January 1, 1913, said:

"About 7,500 co-operative stores are scattered throughout the Empire, forming a certain number of federations, dealing principally with the organization of wholesale purchase. The most important of these federations is that of Moscow, which has about six hundred societies.

"2,700 associations of butter-makers (co-operative dairies) are also grouped in federations (that of Siberia alone numbering close to three hundred associations).

"4,510 other rural co-operative associations,

"8,938 co-operative loan societies,

"3,287 savings associations,

"148 provincial societies for petty loans, whose mission seems principally to be to organize credit for the different classes of co-operative societies. They have a semi-official character, their management being chosen by provincial assemblies, and they are placed under the financial control of the Government.

"Finally, the People's Bank of Moscow, of which nearly all the shares are held either by big co-operative associations or by federations of associations which assure co-operative establishments of the most diverse kind either the necessary credit or the organization of their purchases, either the sale of their produce or the produce of their members' labour, notably home manufacture."

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During our visit to Moscow the greater part of our time was spent in visits to local co-operative associations, their federation, their wholesale department, magnificently installed in new buildings, their Co-operative Bank, and finally, their Co-operative Congress, which is soon to sit in a vast palace in the centre of the city.

We received a most reassuring impression. In the city there was a strike. The dvorniks (hotel doorkeepers) were marching through the city in procession. In the hotels all work was suspended, even in the kitchens; travellers had to make their beds themselves, and had to be satisfied with sandwiches at five roubles a dish (fr. 12.50); while the strike of public services was announced for the next day. Fortunately that did not take place.

In the co-operative hives, on the contrary, all the bees were busy working. They ceased work for a moment to welcome with brotherly cordiality their co-operative comrades from distant Belgium. It was with indescribable emotion that we saw on the walls photographs of the " Vooruit "

and the "Maison du Peuple" of Brussels, positive proofs of the influence exercised by our own movement on the co-operative movement in Russia.

As far as we could learn from what we heard, Moscow seems to be essentially the capital of co-operation. The social influence that it exerts there is considerable. The co-operators sit side by side with delegates of the Soviet, of the municipality, and the other organizations in the assembly, which since the Revolution has taken over the direction of affairs.

There exists, moreover, in Russia a large number of co-operative groceries, which have sprung up under Muscovite influence, and which are developing rapidly even in the most distant parts. In the agricultural districts they are often in close touch with the co-operative dairies, the peasants exchanging their milk for the various goods of which they stand in need.

Co-operative butter-making has produced in Russia a veritable agricultural revolution, like that which in Denmark, for instance, has resulted from its great development. According to the founders of the co-oper-

ative Bank of Moscow, they are in a fair way to suppress private enterprises. This is what they say of the movement in Western Siberia :

" In Western Siberia, and especially within the radius where at present the butter-making is greatly developed, for a long time many factors favourable to the development of the co-operative movement and for its prosperity in the future have been in existence.

" This country, populated by enterprising peasants and owners of vast lands of superb natural pasturages, belongs to the finest cultivated part of Western Siberia ; it is there that already existing associations should be utilized in order to favour their development, to ensure their future prosperity, and to deal with long-standing questions raised by the necessities of life.

" Co-operation in Siberia, founded on solid bases, has assumed a very special character. It came into being at a time when the economic organization of the people was about to collapse as a logical consequence of certain economic causes. It seemed like a reaction after the specula-

tive gambling which had taken place in Siberia, and having arisen in the lower classes, among populations enjoying relative comfort, it showed from the very beginning an extraordinary force and power.

"The industrial butter-making has developed rapidly in Siberia, and even in 1894 butter-making establishments were increasing with astonishing rapidity. At first they were all in the hands of private owners, but the greed of the merchants and their speculations led to the production of an inferior quality of butter. The reputation of Siberian butter was greatly endangered, and this state of things, full of far-reaching consequences from an economic point of view, threatened to cause an irretrievable loss to the country. The co-operative system, which until that day had been merely desirable, then became a necessity for the population, and the butter-making works promptly passed from private persons to the *artels*.

"Let us note here the characteristic fact that the buyers were not as grasping as are most private buyers in similar circumstances. Without trying to exploit the

difficult situation in which the proprietors of the factories were, they paid for these factories according to their proper value.

"To show the intensity of the co-operative movement, let us note that in 1903 there were in Siberia three co-operative associations of butter-makers, and that four years after, in 1907, more than two hundred co-operatives were in full swing. The substitution of co-operative companies for private owners in the ownership and in the management of the factories is not yet complete, but it will soon be.

"At present the Union of the *artels* of Siberia includes 220 associations of butter factories and forty-nine stores. It has its administrative centre at Kourgan, in the province of Tobolsk, and its branches at Pietropavlosk, Tchéliabinsk, Biysk, Barnoul, Kamiegne, and Omsk. The work is not yet finished in this district, but every year new factories come into the combination, and the *artels* open new stores. They hope, moreover, to open this year (1912) branches of the Union in the cities of Valoutorosk and of Ichime, and in the village of Tatarskoye."

Side by side with these positive results of Russian agricultural co-operation let us mention here the projects of certain reformers. Now that the Revolution is going apparently to take up the distribution of land—or a large portion of the land—among the peasants, the problem of cultivation on a large scale comes before us in an entirely new aspect. It had yielded up to the present decisive results: the large properties unquestionably produced more than the peasant holdings, and it is due to them especially that the exportation of cereals had such a real development. Will it be necessary to give this up, to the great detriment of agricultural output, or else limit it to the large properties exempt from expropriation, or on the contrary give peasant ownership up altogether, for the sake of efficiency in the agricultural output? It would seem that there is no democratic and satisfactory solution of this difficulty other than that of co-operative cultivation, extensive cultivation passing from private hands to those of the associations, as was the case with the butter factories. But

all practical business men affirm that in the case of Russian land the difficulties are far more considerable. However, the experiments attempted on a large enough scale in Italy, and especially in Roumania, are on the whole encouraging, and with the help of the semi-communist habits of the Russian peasant perhaps the more vast experiment to which the young democracy seem to be heading may constitute one of its most interesting and original developments.

The savings and loans associations are, as we have stated, very numerous. Most of them help farmers to procure the funds necessary for the perfecting of their working of the land. They also obtain the credit necessary to allow them to hold over until spring—that is to say, until the moment when the prices are at their best—the sale of their wheat. That is a very important question in the agrarian industry of the country. To quote again from the report from which we have already given a long extract:

"It has long been known that in the autumn the peasants are always forced to sell in the market a great quantity of grain at a very low price, because, the

supply exceeding the demand, the price of wheat goes down considerably. As every one knows, the sale of wheat in the spring is much more advantageous. But we shall not dwell at length on this fact here. We are not dealing, either, with the causes of this state of things. Let us note, however, that in Western Siberia there is, as a result of the great distances, of the fact that most of the places are very far distant from marketing centres, great difficulties in the transportation of the wheat to the latter. Groups of agents and corn-dealers have spread a network over this out-of-the-way part of the country. There they live and grow rich, thanks to the ignorance of grain-marketing conditions of the peasants in these distant parts of Siberia. It frequently happens that some corn-dealers will band together to create an artificial drop in the price of wheat, and thus force the peasant coming to the market from a distance to sell his wheat at a price already agreed on. Moreover, it is well known that the practice of fraud in the matter of weights and measures is carried on to a great extent

to the detriment of the peasant-merchants. The evil has acquired a sort of right of naturalization impossible to deal with. There has even grown out of it a special type of commercial traveller, whose patrons think highly of him, and who is very well paid by them. These specialists manipulate so cleverly that the peasants can only raise their arms in astonishment when they learn that in a waggon of twenty pouds of wheat there are only eighteen or nineteen, and that when the price of wheat is fixed at one rouble per poud there is a difference of five to ten kopeks for each poud."

The remedy consists in assuring to the grower a credit gauged on his corn harvest. But that only solves one part of the difficulty. At the actual sale the peasant runs the further risk of falling into the hands of the middleman, unless the association comes again to his aid. Loan societies are therefore coming quite naturally to take up the question of the wholesale purchase of produce, and it is there undoubtedly that their activities can have the most important social consequences.

Let us note still further that these loan

and savings societies are generally encouraged by the local authorities, and that the State comes to their aid by subsidies of important sums of money. We cannot close this rapid survey without mentioning the existence of numerous Societies of Arts and Crafts and industries carried on at home. The oldest of these are the associations of silversmiths, which exist mostly in Moscow.

10. Conclusions.

We would like to point out to the reader that we are not attempting to deal exhaustively with the social conditions in Russia. These are only notes taken in the course of the few weeks that we were able to spend in the land of the Revolution, and they are intended to give simply the impressions of bona fide observers who may claim some little experience in labour matters. It is only as such that these notes can have any value, and it would be rash indeed to try to draw many conclusions from them, so at least we shall have the prudence to reduce these conclusions to a minimum.

Those who only see in the present events in Russia the triumph of irretrievable anarchy are making a great mistake. Constructive forces are already at work, and if we look closely we can already see their results. What we have said of the Trade Union and co-operative movements prove the capacity of the Russian for organization. It is remarkable, but it has limitations. The peasant has inherited it from long series of ancestors, accustomed to rule in common all the affairs of their village life; the working-man brings it fresh from the country that he has just left. When it is necessary to form a queue before the door of the baker's shop, hundreds of women place themselves in the most convenient position without any police supervision. Crowds gather in some public place for a manifestation or a meeting without disorder, without shouting, as if they were imbued with some collective intelligence. The masses seem to understand responsibility, seem to conduct themselves, govern and rule their actions better in Russia than anywhere else.

But the capacity for organization of the

Russian is for the moment limited; his experience does not go as far as the free practice of modern life, and the complicated circumstances of that are as yet not within his grasp. Though the peasant is fully aware of the solidarity that binds him to his village, he understands less the connection between his individual activity and the national life. He will share in a brotherly spirit his corn with a poor neighbour, and he will not even be aware that in refusing to sell his harvest he may reduce the neighbouring town to famine. The worker will give his life for his comrade, but it will never occur to him that he owes his work to the community, and that by refusing it or in reducing it in such a crisis as this he is exposing the whole country to a mortal danger. The vast republic is like a great body whose organs are vigorous and healthy but without sufficient co-ordination to assure the life of the whole.

Co-ordination may come. If we are not mistaken, it is already developing rapidly. Nations mature quickly in the trials of great revolutions. If it is only experience

that Russia lacks, then present events are allowing the Russians to accomplish in a few weeks the progress which in ordinary times takes years. Certainly the future would be more sure had the leaders gained experience in the school of realities, had they lived in immediate contact with social facts; but their ideas have been formed in exile or in prison, and the former government has kept entirely out of public affairs—of all affairs—those who have neither been exiled nor incarcerated. They had to meditate; their existence has been spent in the world of ideas, and not in that of action. Need we be surprised, under such conditions, if abstract principles often dominate them, determine their attitude, and sometimes prevent them from seeing facts.

Now that they find themselves in new conditions the realistic spirit is developing rapidly. We may even say that it is developing with astonishing rapidity. During our short visit we were able to note an evolution in the way in which the best of the leaders viewed the Revolution. This applies both to those who are

ruling the country, and to the more modest who in the factories are acting as counsellors to their comrades. We have already reported on the extreme good-will of every one, and their deep and sincere desire to do right. There is in the Slavonic soul a kind of nobleness that leads it to seek for the truth simply, without obstinately holding to some preconceived idea. These are the really solid grounds for hope. There are some for fear. Already, no doubt, the reader has noted several, and we are going to call attention to one here. Russia can be rescued from its present chaos only by the efforts of every class. She must have the entire, unreserved co-ordination of all. Has this been acquired? In this respect there are some disquieting symptoms. It seems that in the commercial world and in certain political circles a policy of sulking the Revolution, of refusing it any help, has been adopted. It would seem that certain classes are inclined to leave it severely alone in the midst of its difficulties, in the hope that it will succumb to them, and that by favour of an early

reaction the party that is lying low at present will come back to power. They are practising the policy of letting things get worse. There are employers who, instead of combating disorder in their workshops, leave it alone, as if they hoped that extreme disorder in the production would achieve their purpose and obtain for them again the power which they have lost. The same attitude can be noticed in a minority, fortunately not considerable, in all the domains of activity. We can say, in short, that we are witnessing a kind of strike of the citizens. It is, not to use a stronger expression, singularly imprudent, for it could lead to worse even than to a reaction of which it would be difficult to limit the result. It could bring in its train all Russia to a common and possibly irretrievable ruin.

But the Revolution is more vigorous than it appears to the superficial observer. Its necessity imposes itself more and more on those who at first were inclined to doubt its viability. It is carrying with it even those who were recalcitrant, and,

taken all in all, events confirm so far the prophecy of those who see in the Russian Revolution the first act in a new and fecund era in the history of mankind.

CHAPTER III

THE REVOLUTION IN THE ARMIES

1. Our Departure for the Front.

ON leaving Petrograd for the front we were conscious of a certain apprehension and as great a curiosity as we had felt when we first set foot in revolutionary Russia. Petrograd had given us the impression that although it was there in the capital that the problems of the Russian Revolution were put, since May 1917 it had ceased to be the place where these problems were *solved.* The capital had become merely the echo of all that was happening throughout the country, and especially on the front. Thus it was on the armies at the front, and on the material and especially the moral possibility of an offensive that depended the maintenance of the Provisional Govern-

ment, as well as the cure of the attack of anarchy and political neurasthenia from which the country had suffered since the Revolution.

George Bernard Shaw has said, in that paradoxical style of his in which there is often so much truth: "If it be true that to win a war you must have a united omnipotent Government, it is no less true under present circumstances that if you want a united omnipotent Government you must have a war . . . if the Russian Revolution is to be saved from reaction, and the Russian Republic from disruption by the discontent of the working class and the diversity of the ideals of its own reformers, the revolutionary Government must fortify itself by a war, precisely as the French revolutionary Government had to do. If there were no war, it would have to make one.

"By a stroke of luck so fortunate that few good Churchmen will hesitate to describe it as providential, the Russian leaders are spared the necessity of cynically making war to save their country. The

war is ready made for them, largely by the folly of their discarded rulers, and the Revolution has transformed it from a dynastic pan-Slav war to a crusade for liberty and equality throughout the world. Yesterday the kings of the earth rose up and their rulers took counsel together against the Lord and His anointed. To-day the democrats of the earth rise up and their leaders take counsel together against the kings; and in this holy war lies the salvation of Russia from anarchy."

It was as the apostles of that Holy War that we were going to the front. Our visit was to be neither an amateur excursion nor simply a means of satisfying our own curiosity. The generalissimo who had invited us—it was General Alexeieff at that time—gave us to understand that he expected it to be a veritable mission of propaganda. He wished our efforts to be joined to those that had been made a little while before by the delegations from the Black Sea sailors, by Kerensky, and Albert Thomas, in order to perfect what he called the moral preparation for the offensive.

Needless to say, a visit to the front in such conditions would give us an opportunity of making more interesting observations than are generally possible on an official mission, or to journalists on specially conducted tours. We were to have a unique opportunity of contact and free discussion with the representatives of the different conflicting opinions in existence in the Russian armies. Moreover, experience had already taught us that the Russian organizers of our trip would not try to hide from us any of the weaknesses of the situation. On the contrary, they carried frankness to such a pitch that one day they went so far as to ask us to address the mutinous troops of an army corps which had refused to return to the trenches and were encamped near Buczacz and threatening to march on Tarnopol. Though in the end that visit did not take place, it was only because in the meantime the Russian Government had put an end to all negotiations with the rebels and announced that they would be made to obey, by force if need be.

Moreover, we found in every one of

the military authorities whom we met in Russia a disposition, surprising to those of us who were accustomed to the systematic reticence of our general staffs in the West, to hide nothing from us that they knew themselves regarding the military situation. Three weeks before the offensive in Galicia, for instance, we had been shown all the plans and given the date. Everywhere that we went we found similar proofs of this communicative disposition. Certainly its adoption might be open to criticism as a general rule of conduct in the direction of military operations, but it merely appeared to us in this instance as another proof of the touching and cordial hospitality of the Russian, for whom the stranger is indeed a brother, and with whom he is ready to share even his secrets.

2. At the Stavka.

It was such hospitality as this that we found awaiting us on our arrival at the Stavka, the great Russian General Headquarters, which is eighteen hours' railway journey south-west of Petrograd.

We arrived there on the 6th of June. The spacious and comfortable railway waggon in which we had travelled, and which we were to have at our disposal during our whole trip, was formerly used by General Rousski; it had during the early days of the Revolution been used by the delegates of the Provisional Committee to go and meet the Czar and obtain his signature to his act of abdication in the station at Pskov.

Generalissimo Alexeieff, who received us at the Stavka, was about to surrender his post to General Broussiloff. Thus we had the good fortune to meet the two great leaders of the revolutionary army, one at the close and the other at the beginning of his office. Both, in their different ways, made a great impression on us.

We knew General Alexeieff from his photographs, that show him possessed of the typical physiognomy of the moujik—large mouth, large nose, with small and baggy eyes under bushy eyebrows. What a surprise it was to find beneath this rough-hewn plebeian mask a fine and expressive physiognomy. Alexeieff truly is more like

a professor than a soldier. His eyes, behind his short-sighted glasses, look you through and through, but with a smiling glance. He speaks slowly, gently, and kindly. Only the gestures of his hands, with their long, thin fingers, betrayed a slight nervousness, caused, no doubt, by the strain of the gigantic task that this energetic worker has been carrying on during the past three years, and perhaps also expressing the grief that he must have felt at a career cut short so soon. But in speaking Alexeieff showed neither regret nor bitterness. He seemed full of a quiet confidence, praising his successor unreservedly. With not one word of criticism for a Government that had just relieved him of his command because of a word of possibly intentional imprudence which he had uttered during a little address to his officers, when he treated as Utopian the device "without annexations or contributions." And indeed there is not on his part any diplomatic reserve. His friends, and even his enemies, agree in saying, the latter in reproach, the former in his praise, that he has never been able

to say anything that he did not think. His sincerity and his kindness are evident with every gesture, with every word. He is the incarnation of the ancient military Russian hierarchy in its patriarchal aspect, and one can easily imagine the soldiers addressing him as " father " when he speaks to them as " my children." We could not help remarking when we left his presence that it was such men as he who could best make us realize what is meant by the " Slavonic charm."

Slavonic also to his fingers' tips, but of an entirely different type, is Broussiloff. We saw him when he arrived the next morning from the armies of the south-west, whose command he had just resigned. His very first gestures—a few salutes, a review, a parade of the guard of honour waiting for him at the station—indicated the energy, the self-confidence, the natural air of ease and command that make a leader of men. But though commanding, he has no brutality, no roughness, either of expression or of gesture. That is the most striking difference from the Germans, even from Germanized Austro-Slavs, the

inborn refinement of the Russian. His small, blinking eyes are less kind but more sharp than those of Alexeieff. His glance is proud and keen; only the redness of the eyelids displayed traces of fatigue. The forehead is high and narrow, the nose aquiline, the thin lips, surmounted by a small grey moustache, are compressed; all that denotes energy. He is of slender, muscular build, his athletic form well displayed in his close-fitting uniform. He is one of those men of steel who seem to be born to command.

Broussiloff received us immediately after his arrival at the chief General Headquarters, his knowledge of French enabling us to dispense with an interpreter. With regard to the great Galician offensive of 1916, on which we complimented him, he did not hide that he believed he had been the victim of treason on the part of the Government. Without that, he told us, the offensive, which had cost the enemy 408,000 prisoners and 800,000 killed and wounded, would never have been stopped. But the Government, at the decisive moment, uneasy, doubtless,

at the prospect of a complete Austrian defeat, cut short the supplies and sent forward no more munitions. On the other hand, the inertia of the armies of Evert and of Kuropatkin, on his right, left him at the mercy of a German outflanking attack from the north. From that day he became convinced that the Government was in the hands of the pro-German clique, the centre of which was at Tsarskoie Selo, and from which a democratic revolution alone could save Russia.

Broussiloff did not hide from us either that this Revolution, while saving the country from the shame of irretrievable defeat, had created new difficulties for the armies. His account of the present situation in the army showed no pessimism, but on the other hand no great optimism. The material conditions were more favourable than they ever were for an offensive, he told us; there was abundance of war material, munitions, forage. But the discipline had been shaken; whole armies had been undermined by the Léninist propaganda, demoralized by "fraternizations." However, the group of armies of

the south-west and of the south, which were the most important in the coming offensive, had been the least attacked. Their discipline and their confidence in their leaders were being re-established little by little. The offensive would show us, concluded Broussiloff, if the *moral* that we are trying to raise just now by an intense propaganda was sufficiently good to allow of our obtaining great strategical results. "As for myself," he added, "I shall do all that I can with the means at my disposal and *hope for the best.*"

Broussiloff summed up the material situation at the front thus: The long period of inactivity that the Russian army had just passed through had allowed of the accumulation of a great quantity of war material and munitions. It is not the production that regulates the supply of it at the front; that depends upon the transport by rail and river navigation, for the means of transport that Russia has at its disposal does not allow of all the material produced or imported being delivered at the front within a fixed time. It is because of this that the temporary

suspension of production in the interior has scarcely any immediate importance; for supplies continue to arrive from the reserve stores, including munitions made before the beginning of the war, and that the carelessness of the former Government had left lying at the depots. The artillery is much stronger to-day than it was a year ago. The Russian army has a bigger field artillery than the enemy, while with regard to heavy artillery, they are about equal. Trench artillery is still in its embryonic stage on either side. The munitions are in sufficient quantity to permit of our carrying on an offensive over a large front during several weeks; the light artillery alone has in reserve more than twenty million rounds. A very critical situation had been created towards the end of the winter by the shortage of forage. That crisis was now over, and the horses, the importance of which is enormous, owing to the lack of railways and good roadways for heavy automobiles, were now once more in good condition.

We asked Broussiloff what he thought of the desertions which had taken place

en masse after the Revolution. They have had no real importance, he stated, except in the rear; there are probably not more than ten thousand deserters from the front.

3. Desertions and Fraternizations.

This statement, surprising as it may seem at first sight, can readily be believed by any one who has seen the Russian army, or rather the two Russian armies, that of the front and that of the rear. There are, indeed, rather more than two million soldiers on the front, and a much more considerable number of men, nearly all without arms, in the rear, notably at the depots. Their number is reckoned at various figures—roughly at between eight and twelve millions. Nothing more curious can be seen, for instance, than these reserve battalions of regiments which, like that of Préobrajensky, of Volhynia, or of Finland, have their depot at Petrograd. Among these there are battalions which number more than ten thousand men, of whom the largest part have never

been near the front, many who have never handled a rifle.

What have they been doing during the past three years? Very little assuredly. Their drill takes them only a few hours per week. There are very few arms or material available for instruction; very few officers, and most of the officers loafing about in the depots have never made war and know only the routine of garrison life. In general, the discipline is not sufficiently strict to enable the officers to exact from their troops a really serious effort of instruction or training. Such drill as one sees among the troops in Petrograd is generally most primitive, and as a rule they content themselves with continuing the ordinary garrison routine of peace times. They teach the soldiers to salute and to reply to their officers according to the rules of the former Government—which, however, are scarcely applicable, in Petrograd at least, since the Revolution. If they have a certain number of rifles at their disposal, they execute a few movements in close formation with their arms shouldered, and that is all. Little or no

target practice, no route marches, no grenade throwing or trench construction and manœuvres. Such a condition existed before the Revolution, with this difference, that then there were rather more parade drills and outward show of discipline. But for three years now there has been simply inactivity—the monotony and the ennui of garrison life in peace-time, only lazier and less disciplined. The Russian soldier, easy-going (*flemmard*) by nature, adapts himself to it easily, and greatly appreciates the good soup and the abundant rations of bread (three pounds per day) and the *kascha* (boiled porridge of sarazin) allowed him.

We can easily imagine what took place at the time of the Revolution. For the soldier it stood for the complete suppression of all hierarchy and discipline. Henceforth he had no more masters, and could do what he pleased. What more natural, then, than to see him profit by his new liberty to take the train and go and see how things were going at home. That was done all the more easily because soldiers travelled henceforth without tickets or

any travelling permit whatever. The general anarchy that reigned permitted them, moreover, to turn out from the compartments, if need be, civilians and officers, and take their place. During the first months of the era of liberty soldiers filled the stations and the trains in such numbers that not only did travelling become impossible for civilians, but the transport crisis was seriously aggravated. Even in the month of June, when the situation was considerably ameliorated, we still saw them jumping on all the trains, climbing on the footboards, the buffers, and even on the roofs of the waggons, which became like human bunches of grapes.

In spite of the discomfort and the danger of this method of travelling, it must have appeared very desirable to a large number of soldiers, for they left their garrisons simply to travel a certain distance by train, even when they had not at the end of the journey the prospect of a large city with its attractions and opportunities for spending money. We were told that enormous numbers of soldiers travelled thus during weeks over a great part of

the railway system, sleeping in the stations or in the waggons, feeding on hard-boiled eggs, black sausages flavoured with garlic, or buckwheat biscuits, which were sold by the peasants on all station platforms with glasses of tea.

What attraction could such a method of travelling have for them? Certainly neither that of comfort nor the beauty of the country, for scenery is something that this class of travellers care little for. Simply the delight of feeling themselves free, of being able to go alone where they wished to, and to do what they pleased. It is not, after all, so very different from the mentality of the Belgian or French soldier, who, released during his leave from the long constraint and the promiscuity of the front and the depots, finds pleasure in feeling himself alone and free, and prefers, for instance, spending the whole night walking in the street or sleeping on the floor of some waiting-room rather than sharing some common dormitory which, even if it is comfortable, smacks too much of the atmosphere of barracks or billets.

As a general rule, moreover, pleasures of this kind, even in the case of soldiers who had, more wisely, returned to their own villages and houses, soon became monotonous. And so after a few days or weeks the deserters of this category began to long for the fleshpots of their regiment, and placidly returned to their barracks.

But can we honestly treat as deserters these poor wretches who simply profited by their new liberty to celebrate the event? Was it not rather a question of an irregular leave of absence that those soldiers granted themselves for a space of time limited by their money or their choice? Indeed, that was exactly what did limit it in the immense majority of cases of desertions, the number of which has been variously reckoned at one, two, three, and even four millions, but the only effect of which on the Russian army has been to diminish for a certain time by a corresponding figure the number of rations that were distributed to these idle men lounging in the depots and the barracks at the rear.

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By that we do not mean that the sudden relaxation of discipline produced by the Revolution has not been felt by the troops at the front.

No one would dream of suggesting such a thing. But we must not forget that by the very nature of things this relaxation of discipline was never as marked among the troops at the front, better organized, more fully occupied, nearer the enemy, and farther from the enervating atmosphere and the thousand temptations that were at work on the soldiers in the big towns. And then there were the material difficulties which made desertions or these long train trips much more difficult to accomplish for the men at the front than for the soldiers in the rear. In the first place, the great distances, hundreds of kilometres in some instances, that the soldier had to traverse from the trenches or from his billet to the nearest station, without the welcome assistance of an obliging automobile, and then, after several days' tramp, the prospect of having to wait a few more to procure a place on the roof of a railway compartment, made the project one not to be undertaken

too readily. One can understand, moreover, that the number of desertions on the front was very small, since for the soldiers at the front " fraternization " played the same part for them as desertion for those in the rear.

We have had no direct information on the character and the extent of this fraternization. In the sectors of the front that we visited there had never been, or else there had long ceased to be, any fraternizations. But all the members of the Government, or the military leaders whom we questioned, agreed in saying that during the first weeks of the Revolution fraternization with the enemy, under various forms, was a general rule on the northern part of the front ; it had been fairly frequent on the southern and rather less so on the south-western front.

It was limited for the most part to a practical armistice, with here and there an attempt to establish what the military penal code calls intelligence with the enemy—messages thrown from one trench to another, communications by signalling, etc. Often, however, they went farther,

either the Russians or the Germans—the latter apparently acting on the orders of their officers—leaving their trenches to come to the trenches of the enemy, and even to their billets, and mixing with the enemy troops and really fraternizing with them. We were told that in certain sectors of the northern front the Germans went so far as to organize behind their first line of trenches concerts with their military bands, to which the Russian soldiers were invited and eventually came in large numbers, ready to return the compliment the next day.

There is no doubt that incidentally these reciprocal visits have allowed the Germans and the Austrians to glean valuable information about the positions and numbers of the Russian troops. They did not limit themselves to that, however; all the information that we have received on the subject showed that the Austrians and the Germans, especially the latter, had organized the distribution of alcohol to the Russians on a large scale. Sometimes the Austro-German soldiers would exchange it individually for cigarettes or rations

of food; sometimes also there were regular distributions that were made on a large scale to the extent of hundreds of litres. It seems that the quantities of alcohol thus introduced in the Russian lines was sufficient in some cases to permit the establishment of regular little stocks, which, at the time of our visit, had not become quite exhausted. In a certain sector of the south-west some of the liquor which had been thus obtained from the Germans was offered to us. It was excellent.

4. The German Propaganda.

The demoralizing propaganda carried out by the Germans on the Russians, especially since the Revolution, is most formidable. Daily, enormous quantities of literature are thrown from aircraft above the Russian lines. We have been told that these pamphlets are written in correct colloquial Russian, whilst on the other hand we were shown pamphlets of propaganda, prepared by the Russians and the other Allies for the German lines, which

were written in schoolboy German, destined from their sense as well as from their form only to evoke laughter among their readers.

The essence of the German propaganda is always the same; they try to convince the Russians that they are the victims of British and French imperialism, for which they are making a great mistake in allowing themselves to be killed. It is especially against England that their arguments are levelled. In this regard there is a curious coincidence between the German propaganda proper and the views that we heard expressed at Petrograd by certain pacifists—Bolscheviki, Menscheviki, and Internationalists: one of the latter, an influential member of the Soviet of Petrograd, who was wearing, moreover, the uniform of a Russian officer, and who could not, apparently, forget that he had had difficulties in obtaining a passport, from the English military authorities, after having for several years enjoyed the British hospitality that is granted to all political refugees, went so far as to affirm gravely that the real danger which threatens Europe

to-day is not German militarism, but British imperialism !

One method of propaganda is a large map, very well drawn up by the German staff, with a broad margin containing very clever commentaries. This map, which has been distributed throughout the Russian front by hundreds of thousands, shows the Russian Empire surrounded on all sides, from Port Arthur to Archangel, by the tentacles of the British octopus. The zones of British influence are printed in the same shade as the metropolitan and colonial territory: they include notably Archangel, Cronstadt, and Aaland; and outside of Russia, Persia, Arabia, Syria, Macedonia, Northern France, and that part of Belgium which is not occupied by the Germans. . . .

It seems, moreover, that this propaganda, while admirably organized and splendidly carried on, has the same fault that we find in all German enterprises of this sort; it overreaches its mark, and provokes finally, by its ponderous insistence, a psychological reaction, which is the one result that its organizers had failed to

foresee. Certainly the Russians showed during the first weeks of the revolutionary era a credulity all the more admirable in that it comes less from their profound ignorance of everything foreign than from a temperament which, after all, is very sympathetic. There is something touching in the almost mystic ardour with which the Russians cling to the idea of the fraternity of all humanity, and the naïve and hospitable confidence with which they greet any one who comes from other lands with manifestations of friendship. But there is, unfortunately for those who try to exploit his credulity in an unscrupulous manner, another side to the picture as soon as the inevitable and final disillusion manifests itself. The disillusioned moujik feels against the person who has abused his good faith a resentment all the keener the greater his belief has been.

It is said even that towards the end of the era of fraternization certain so-called enemy parliamentarians have been aware of this to their cost. At the time of our visit to the south-western and southern fronts every one of them had begun to

perceive the white thread with which the German tissue of falsehoods was sewn. The Russians had ended by saying to themselves that after all the German revolution, which they had thought certain in the first intoxication of their triumph, did not seem likely to take place, and if anything was changed, it was only on their own side of the trenches. And so when we visited the trenches they were no longer exchanging cigarettes and bottles of vodka with the enemy, but shot and shell.

None the less, a few days before, a German officer had tried to penetrate into the Russian lines under cover of the white flag of the parliamentary party. He was allowed to approach, and taken to the nearest military authority with the usual ceremony, and there they asked him the reason for his visit. He exhibited a paper, the original of which was shown to us, and which said, in so many words, "that the staff of the Austro-German Army of the South had deputed the officer bearing the passport to go and negotiate with the delegates of the Russian soldiers in order to expose to them the point of

view of the German and Austrian Governments." The Russian authority decided that this action was an abuse of the white flag in order to cover a mission of demoralizing propaganda, and the German colonel was sent to Siberia, there to make some complementary reflections at his leisure on the "point of view of the German and Austrian Governments." It is said that the anger of the poor man, who had obviously expected a different reception, was really laughable. He had to admit to himself that the Russians had ceased to be as trustful and credulous as they had seemed in the beginning. It is not remarkable, therefore, to learn that the Austro-German General Staff at the beginning of June issued an order to stop all attempt at intercourse with the Russians.

5. With the 7th Army.

Following the advice of General Broussiloff, we decided to go to the southwest front of the armies before going to Jassy, where the Roumanian Government had invited us. We were to visit succes-

sively the three armies who held the front in Galicia, and which would be called upon to play the principal part in the coming offensive : the 7th Army in the centre, the 11th on the right, and the 8th on the left.

There were twenty hours' railroad journey from the Stavka to Kamenetz Podolski, where the headquarters of the armies of the south-west were installed. General Goutor, who had just succeeded Broussiloff, received us. He had already made the necessary arrangements for the rest of our journey, which was to be made by motor-car. Indeed, after leaving the Austrian frontier near Kamenetz there are only narrow-gauge railways, on which our wide Russian railway carriage could not travel. We were to return to it only at Jassy. Between Kamenetz and Jassy we were to motor about 1,500 kilometres, half of them only on roads which are worthy of the name. The rest was done—and how ?—on sandy tracks made throughout the country simply by the passage of mounted troops, or on roads that the Creator—for human intervention in their construction was never clearly demonstrated

—had certainly never intended to be used for motoring.

We were to leave on the same night for Buczacz, the headquarters of the 7th Army, which we hoped to reach during the night. Before leaving Kamenetz Podolski we were received by the Soviet of the officers and soldiers' delegates of the armies of the south-west. It was the first time that we had come actually into touch with an organization of that kind. Our interview was much the same as the numerous interviews that we were to have with the Soviets of all formations and units that we visited later on—an extremely cordial reception, an exceptionally attentive public, who listened to our statements with evident sympathy; then questions, nearly always the same, on the situation in occupied Belgium, the possibility of a revolution in Germany, and especially the Stockholm conference. The insistence with which they questioned us on this subject, in the Soviets as at the meetings on the front, shows the extreme importance that this attempt at a reunion of the International had gained

in the mind of the Russian soldier: had not the Soviet of Petrograd made them believe that it would be a regular peace conference ?

It seemed quite clear to us, however, that the enthusiasm of the army for the Stockholm Conference had considerably cooled down since it had become more and more clear that the hopes of a democratic revolution in Germany, as a direct result of the Russian Revolution, were denied by stern reality. Also, with one exception—that of a somewhat timid Bolcheviki heckler at a meeting at Podgaïce —the statement we made regarding our attitude in connection with the proposed International Socialist Conference met on the front with nothing but complete approval.

We had the pleasure of meeting again in the Soviet of the armies of the south-west one of the delegates from the sailors of the Black Sea, whom we had met three weeks previously at Petrograd. We met several others later on. After having visited Petrograd and the other large towns of the provinces, these 160 delegates, sent

by their comrades to carry on a propaganda for the re-establishment of discipline and for the offensive, had separated to go to the front, where they visited the Soviets of all the units. Their work had certainly a considerable effect on the moral reconstruction of the army.

6. A Land of Milk and Honey.

As soon as the sitting of the Soviet was over we set forth for Buczacz. Shortly after leaving the town of Kamenetz, beautifully situated on a hill overlooking an idyllic valley and surmounted by the ruins of a Turkish fortress, we reached the Austrian frontier. Here we saw first the traces of the combats of the three preceding years, the ruins of the Austrian Customs House reminding us of the first invasion of Galicia by the Russians in 1914.

This invasion seems scarcely, however, to have done much harm to the country. Certainly here, as elsewhere, war has caused cruel devastation : about one hundred kilometres farther inland, where the old line of trenches, showing the extreme point

of the advance of the Austrians in 1915, begins, we entered the zone of villages and towns destroyed and of abandoned farms. But outside the area that has been the scene of military operations it would seem that Galicia and Bucowina are the parts of Europe that have least felt the war.

In the first place, they have this particularity: that it is the only country engaged in war where the majority of the adult population is now at home. They had been called up, of course, during the Austrian mobilization, but they soon returned. The majority of the soldiers from that part of the country only awaited, as a matter of fact, an opportunity to be made prisoners by the Russians, so as to be able to return to their homes. They were well aware that the Russians granted great freedom to prisoners of Slavonic origin. Cases have been known where entire units of the Austrian army, composed of Slavs and Ruthuanians, surrendered without fighting, on the express condition that they were allowed to return to their farms in the occupied part of the country. And thus it is that the majority of the

men whom one sees working on the farms or smoking their pipes at the door of their little farmhouses wear Austrian uniform.

Our automobiles passed through picturesque villages, the whitewashed cottages and farmhouses, with their extraordinarily shaped thatched roofs, surrounded by gardens and orchards of apple-trees. Few trees are to be seen, however, outside of the little oases that form the villages; farther on lay the bare plain, with prairies and wheatfields stretching to the horizon.

The sun was setting, and in all the villages that we passed through an atmosphere of gaiety reigned. It was a Saturday night, and under the elm that shades the church square or in the fields on the roadside all the villagers in the picturesque costume of Ruthuanian peasants, among which the uniforms of the Austrian prisoners made patches of grey, had gathered to dance to the sound of a violin, played by a musician posted under a tree. Every one, even the dancers, were singing, and their voices in choruses of two and three parts blended with the music of the violin. At half-past ten we could still see the whole

population of a village dancing on the roadside, singing folk-songs, while in the automobile which was bearing us along we could not help thinking in contrast of the sufferings of occupied Belgium. . . .

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But other surprises were in store for us. About eleven o'clock we reached a little town, Tchertkoff. In the town's principal square there was one big house brightly illuminated. It proved to be one of the largest cafés of the district, where, as in all towns or villages of Austria, the major part of the population spend the most of their time. We went in. An animated crowd, with many Russian officers among them, filled the place. They paid scarcely any attention to us, and allowed us to install ourselves quietly at the only unoccupied table. On that table, as on all the others, there were platters filled with cake and a delicious white bread made with milk and eggs, which, except for the currants, reminded us of our Brussels "cramiques." Along with that there was excellent coffee with cream, such as is

only to be found in the Austrian cafés. We leave it to the reader's imagination to judge how we enjoyed this feast, after two months of "voluntary rationing" in London, *Resbrödkort* in Sweden, and the horrible black viscosity that they served us in the name of bread at Petrograd.

We found the same abundance later in the other Austrian towns that we visited. If we think for a moment, such a condition is not surprising. That part of Austria which is occupied, a district as large as Belgium, is an entirely rural region; the rare towns and villages that one comes across are only agricultural markets. The soil is fertile. Products of every description are plentiful. The exportation of these products is very difficult, indeed practically impossible, for there is on the one side the barrier of the trenches, and on the other hand the impossibility of using the Russian railway lines for anything besides military transports. The Russian army of occupation furnishes a surplus population just dense enough—save on the immediate front, where the concentration of troops leads to more difficulty in obtaining

their supplies on the spot—to enable the inhabitants to dispose of the surplus of their produce at prices slightly above the former very low cost of living. Thus we see that, economically, this district, which one might have imagined devastated by three invasions in three years, is a veritable land of plenty, in comparison with any other country, belligerent or neutral.

Let us hasten to add that the rule of the Russians in occupation is very mild. We have already seen an example of this in the presence of the freed prisoners, who walk about in their Austrian uniforms from the frontier of Podolia to the second line of trenches. Generally speaking, the presence of the Russian army does not seem to inspire the civilians of that district with the terror that remains in our land, for instance, at the mention of the Cossacks to the great-grandchildren of those who remember 1815.

In certain cases the Russians of 1914, in Eastern Prussia for instance, may have shown themselves worthy descendants of their ancestors, but in all our journeying in Galicia we did not meet with a single

instance of depredation. On the contrary, at every step we had fresh instances of the extreme respect of the Russians for the rights of the population in the occupied country. And this is not only because of their affinity of race and language. The peasant, for instance, has not made a very good impression upon the Russian soldier, who accuses the native of exploiting him and making him pay very much too dear for food.

It would be an exaggeration to state that the population manifests anything that would remotely resemble enthusiasm for Russia. The Ruthuanians, properly speaking, are the only ones who look upon the Russians as their liberators. The greater part of the peasant population obviously take no interest in the war as a political event; they think of it only with regard to its effect upon their immediate material interests. They submit with indifference to the flux and reflux of the occupations, alternately Russian and Austrian, and only try to get what profit they can out of both armies, while a minority, composed of a part of the

Jewish and German populations of the small towns, is evidently hostile to the Russians, and longs for the return of Austrian rule: the Austrian Germans, for obvious reasons, the Jews especially, from their ancient resentment to the Russians, which the Russian Revolution has hardly attenuated, because of the oppression of their race in Russia.

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This hostility of a minority of the populations of the towns is openly shown. That is further proof of the benevolence of the Russian rule. Belgians and British whom we met in Galicia were astonished to see the Russians accommodating themselves so benevolently to this resentful, contemptuous attitude, that was demonstrated, for instance, by young Jews in the cafés. Our fellow-countrymen did not hide their contempt of what they called the cowardice of the Russians. At a meeting in the open air that we had held at Tarnopol, about a thousand Austrian civilians, men and women, were among our soldier audience. During one of the speeches one of the

auditors, it seems, had manifested loudly his hostility to the cause that we were defending. The Russian soldiers who surrounded him had politely asked him to be quiet, but without molesting him in any way, so that the incident had passed unnoticed by the member of our party who was speaking at the time. Such tolerance was certainly astonishing to Westerners, but they were wrong, we think, in calling it cowardice. We, who had been in Russia for several weeks, had constant proofs, just as surprising, of the extreme respect for liberty of opinion which characterizes this good-natured people, and to us this came less as a surprise. Certainly one must admit there is an element of native indolence, of *nitchewoïsme*, in the mild manner in which the Russians rule the inhabitants of this enemy territory. But at bottom this attitude is the same as the psychological disposition of the average Russian taken individually. It is especially a manifestation of that naïve kindness, of that evangelical passivity, of that deep-rooted hospitality which is the most striking characteristic of the Russian.

How can we explain otherwise that these same Russians, who have everywhere in their own country destroyed and burned the slightest sign reminiscent of the Czarist Government, have left in Bucowina and in Galicia all the Austrian symbols ? Everywhere on the public buildings one saw the Austrian eagle and German inscriptions, superfluous, moreover, in a country where the only languages spoken are the Ruthuanian, Slav, and Polish. Even the old tobacco shops of the Austrian monopoly have retained their black and yellow signs. At Czernowitz, when General Korniloff received us at the General Headquarters, established in the palace of the former Austrian Governor, he was seated under a life-sized portrait of the Emperor Francis Joseph. Now in Russia we should have to look long before we could find a portrait of the Czar with anything left but the frame !

In that same city, accompanied by two Russian officers, we had gone to make some purchases in a shop. It was kept by people whose Viennese accent clearly showed their origin. They wrapped up our purchases in a copy of the *Arbeiter*

Zeitung, dated July 1914. One of us who had been a student in Vienna, exclaimed: "Well, it reminds one of many things to see a copy of the *Arbeiter Zeitung* of pre-war days." And the shopkeeper added immediately, with a deep sigh: "If only we could begin to receive it again every morning as we used to before the war!" Our Russian friends only smiled at this statement. We, however, could not help thinking what would have happened to a Belgian shopkeeper if he had made a similar remark in the presence of German officers in the zone of the armies or if a citizen of Noyon, before some French officer, had expressed regret at not seeing the *Liller Kriegszeitung* any more.

We had another example of Russian tolerance when we arrived at Buczacz. It was one o'clock in the morning, and the General Staff had not expected our arrival in the middle of the night. Most of the town having been demolished by the bombardments, lodgings were scarce. To make room for us, soldiers and officers who were occupying a little villa that had remained intact in the outskirts of the

town, were asked to turn out. The next morning we inspected the place, which had evidently served as a billet for the Russian troops during several months. On all the walls there were photographs of the former owner of the house, an Austrian officer, generally taken in his full regalia and uniform. They had not disturbed the portraits nor any of the other souvenirs that had belonged to the former inhabitants. Can we imagine Belgian or French soldiers living for weeks under the martial gaze of a German officer, even if only in a portrait ?

7. The 108th Division.

After a very cordial reception from General Belkovitch, commanding the 7th Army, and from his General Staff, and a long conference with the army Soviet, we got into touch for the first time with the troops at the front. The infantry of the 108th Division was in billets at about fifty kilometres from Buczacz, north of Podgaïce. The army commander had given the order to assemble. Two hours' motoring, over the horrible sandy tracks,

through the grand, wild scenery of the Galician plains, brought us to the appointed place. There we received one of the most striking impressions of our whole trip. Our automobiles were going through a deep valley, when suddenly, at a turning, we saw, some hundreds of yards distant, the long brown ribbon of the troops massed along the two sides of the road which we were following. Amidst that mass of more than nine thousand men there flashed in the sun the brass musical instruments that were playing "La Marseillaise," and the scarlet flags. For the first time we saw an army marching under the red flag of the Internationale. This sight reminded us of our splendid workmen's processions of the past, and, indeed, if instead of these Galician hills there had been on the horizon the slag-heaps of our mining districts, we might have believed we were transported by magic in the midst of one of those crowds of demonstrating workmen that were so familiar to us before the war.

We got down from our car to shake hands with the divisional commander, Stephanovitch, who had come to meet us,

and with him we reviewed the three regiments, passing during twenty minutes between a double line of companies drawn up for review. The impression was once more purely military; not a muscle of these sunburned faces twitched, not a gesture, if it were not the stiff, martial salute of the officers, broke the correct immobility of the whole line. At a sign from the General, while we were installing ourselves on a rising on the side of the road, the ranks broke up, and that mass poured towards us, bringing in its train the General, the officers, the flags, the music, and forming silently and very quickly a great audience. In a moment the review became a public meeting, and the straight military lines of the troops gave place to the picturesque irregular outline of an open-air meeting.

This succession of impressions had been so bewildering that the member of our party who was to speak first found himself quite at a loss. There had been nothing to indicate up to the present what had been expected of us by these soldiers marching under the red flags: while passing us in the review their faces expressed

nothing but the mechanical impassibility of the disciplined soldiers; but in the mass crowded around us we could read intense curiosity.

But as soon as our interpreter, who translated each sentence, had said in Russian the first words, "This red flag under which you are fighting is also our own, . . ." there broke forth an amazing deafening burst of delirious applause. Frantic hurrahs drowned the music of the "Marseillaise" and the "Brabançonne" which the military bands began playing at full blast. And so it was after each sentence, after every allusion to the sufferings of Belgium, to the solidarity between the Allies, to the responsibility of the Russian Revolution with regard to international socialism, and the necessity of safeguarding our honour by breaking by a determined offensive the inactivity on the eastern front.

The advice of friends who understood the psychology of the Russian people, and a certain amount of experience gained from the audiences at Petrograd, Moscow, and Kieff, had taught us to be on our guard against the sometimes fleeting and childish

enthusiasm of this impressionable public, very hospitably disposed at first sight with regard to strangers, very eager to hear speeches, since they are no longer forbidden, and quite ready, especially when young soldiers are concerned, to manifest loudly for or against any statements that are made.

So we restrained ourselves as well as we could from being carried away by this collective enthusiasm. But there could be no possible doubt as to the veritable feeling of our audience as soon as the speakers delegated by the soldiers began to speak and their speeches were translated to us. They all told us in touching terms how great was their admiration for Belgium and their attachment to the Internationale that we represented. They told us of their readiness to complete the work of the Revolution by an offensive against the last autocracies of Europe. There was only one attempt, timid enough it is true, at contradiction on the part of a Bolcheviki soldier, who, evidently hoping to embarrass us, asked a question concerning the Stockholm Conference. But

his question and our reply that "we were adversaries of fraternization with the agents of the Kaiser, whether at Stockholm or in the trenches," was received in such a manner that the Bolcheviki, urged mockingly by his comrades to defend his opinions, promptly vanished in the crowd without insisting further.

The sun was setting when the manifestation ended, and it was not without some difficulty that our automobiles, to which we were carried on the robust shoulders of the soldiers, could start on the sandy tracks again in the direction of Buczacz.

8. A Mutinous Army Corps.

As we started we saw another, not less remarkable, sight. From the heights, gilded by the setting sun, there came interminable columns going towards the front. All of them had the red flag at their head, and the inscriptions on some of them were translated to us: "To victory or death," "To the Trenches for Liberty," "Let us defend Russian Liberty," and another, on the standard

of a mounted artillery brigade: "Our cannons will thunder for Liberty." Nothing could be more picturesque than the sight of these troops covered with the dust of their march, accompanied by horse transport columns which seemed to date from the First Empire, and singing the "Marseillaise" in that slow, modulated manner that the Russians affect. The artillery especially, which formed the largest part of these caravans, was very characteristic. For instance, the sight of two officers seated in an ancient coach, dusty and dirty, drawn by a tired horse, while two other officers, who evidently took turns with those in the conveyance, were walking on the dusty road, holding to the vehicle with one hand, was like a picture from Meissonnier.

These columns that we saw marching towards the trenches were the loyal troops of the 7th Siberian Army, part of which had just mutinied.

This corps, which formed part of the 7th Army, was resting during several weeks, after a long spell in the trenches. The Bolcheviki propaganda, helped, as we were informed from reliable sources, by

Austro-German agents, became very important, and led the men to mutiny against the authority of the Commandant of the army. The rebels asked to be sent for two or three months to a town in the interior of Russia, not only to rest, but to discuss at leisure the political and international situation, after which they would decide whether or not to take part in the offensive. At their head was a Lieutenant-Colonel, who had succeeded in carrying with him two-thirds of the infantry. The rest of the infantry, all the artillery, and the other special arms of the service, in all about half of the total effective, refused to listen to the propagandists of desertion. They even ended by deciding that they wished to have nothing more to do with the rebels, and that they would leave immediately of their own free will for the front. It was these men that we had just seen pass.

As soon as we knew who they were we stopped beside a group of infantrymen to harangue them. It is easy to imagine what we said to these brave fellows, and that it gave them pleasure was evident

from their enthusiasm. Long after we had left them we could still see them, on looking back, waving their fur caps at the end of their long bayonets that were sparkling in the last rays of a glorious sunset.

Long shall we keep the memory of this epic scene, which irresistibly made us think of the heroic days of 1792. With what fervour did we wish that evening, as we saw the red flag guiding these men towards the setting sun, that it could lead them to a grand repetition of Jemmapes and Valmy. The reminiscence was so striking that one of us quoted the words of Goethe to those around him on the night of Valmy : " From this day dates a new era in the history of the world, and you will be able to say : I was there."

But was it to be Valmy ? Or would it be Neerwinden ? Some weeks later we knew : it began as Valmy and ended like Neerwinden.

9. A Terrorist Functionary.

When we arrived at Buczacz we learned that the affair of the 7th Siberian Corps

had become serious. The rebels had just refused to consider the conciliatory propositions of the Government's emissary. They were intending to march on Tarnopol, and to encamp there without authority. What made the situation difficult was that they had retained all the machine-guns of the infantry, which, nevertheless, was gradually separating from the rebels and following the artillery to the front.

General Belkovitch, judging that our intervention might be useful, decided that the next day we should visit the rebels in their camp, about two hours' motor drive from Buczacz.

The next morning, however, the situation had become still more grave. The Government emissary had, after the refusal of the rebels to consider his propositions, finally broken off all negotiations with the rebels, leaving them only as a last resource the assurance that if they had any further proposals to make he would be ready to listen to their delegates until evening. In these conditions he asked us to abandon the idea of visiting them, which was, of course, such a sensible view

that we could not do otherwise than agree with him. We decided then that instead of visiting the rebels we would go and address a part of the troops that had voluntarily returned to the front.

Before setting out we had a long conversation with the Government emissary in question. He was no other than the Revolutionary Socialist Savinkoff, who had on his record of services several deeds of terrorism, of which the most famous was that against Plevhe at Odessa. The terrorist of Odessa was now in khaki uniform, representing the Government, and preaching discipline and national duty to the troops. And he had quite the air of being the right man in the right place. Such was certainly the opinion of the Commandant of the 7th Army, who was nevertheless an old soldier, trained in quite a different school from that of the Revolution. While by no means concealing his dislike for the institution of "commissioners to the armies," in which he saw an attempt to rescind the authority of the hierarchic leaders, he loyally owned that Savinkoff was rendering great service

to him in the re-establishment of discipline in the army, and that " it was a pleasure, moreover, to have personal dealings with a man possessed of such good common sense." Also, if one were to judge by the manner, both firm and prudent, in which he had conducted the affair of the 7th Siberian Corps, Savinkoff, who was soon to become Minister of War, deserved this flattering appreciation. We learned some days later that the question of the 7th Army Corps had been, thanks to his diplomacy, settled in a satisfactory manner. As soon as the Government had shown that it was ready to employ force, if necessary, to reduce the rebels to obedience, they had yielded at once and abandoned their resistance. In order to punish them, and at the same time to act justly towards the loyal troops who had refused to serve again in the same units with the traitors, they were immediately sent to the front in small groups, separated among various units.

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One hour in the automobile brought us, through Monasterjiski, to the little hamlet

where we found some thousands of infantrymen of the 7th Corps " who had deserted *towards* the front." We addressed them from the doorstep of a little church, around which there were only orchards and no houses, the cottages of the villages being very scattered. As there were among these Siberians a fairly large percentage of industrial labourers, the socialistic note was particularly accentuated in the manifestations of the assembly.

10. From Buczacz to Iezierna.

The same day we left Buczacz and the 7th Army Corps for the General Headquarters of the 11th Army, the right wing of which, the 6th Corps, was encamped at Iezierna.

During the motor run, as on the two previous days, we saw interesting traces of the military operations which, since 1914, had been taking place in this district. Many of the villages that we passed through were in a large measure destroyed by bombardment. Some had been completely abandoned by their inhabitants, and the

whole surrounding country, left uncultivated, was covered by veritable jungles of weeds and flowers of many colours. We came across the old lines of trenches and barbed-wire entanglements. Shell-holes and little wooden crosses were alongside the roads, marking the places where the combats had been most fierce.

In this undulating country, with little vegetation, it is easy to take in at one glance the whole former organization of the land for several kilometres round. On that bare soil, where the zigzag of the trenches and of the lines of barbed-wire entanglements are the traces left of the gigantic battles that had taken place there, it did not need a very great effort of imagination, thanks to the shell-holes which revealed the artillery preparations and the individual pits dotted here and there that showed the progress of the attacking troops, to bring to our minds the often terrible battles that have marked the flux and the reflux of the enemy forces during three years.

A particularly tragic impression was awaiting us some kilometres north of

Buczacz. The country was entirely deserted, with its uncultivated lands and the immense plain without a tree, without even a shrub. As we reached a cross-road the Russian officer who accompanied us said : " Look ! " We only saw two roads, and to the left of the principal one, a few hundred yards away from each other, two bits of ruined walls rising out of the brushwood, all that was left of a formerly prosperous little town. The walls indicated the sites of two churches, and had evidently been left there as signposts. As far as the houses were concerned, there was not the slightest trace of even their ruins. We got out of the motor-car to see if we could not discover some trace of remains. We looked in vain ; there was nothing anywhere but a mass of weeds, which came up to our waists, wild flowers of a thousand colours, over which the butterflies were fluttering. From time to time we struck our feet against some bricks or against a little eminence that perhaps had been a wall. The only visible trace of habitation that remained was the wells, of which the little walls had been razed to the ground ; the

holes seemed like big dark eyes gazing up at the heavens.

Assuredly, we had never seen such diabolically refined devastation; they had not been content with demolishing, but the material even had been carted away and thrown out on the roads or in the ditches. Who was it that had done that? It was neither the Russians nor the Austrians. The Germans had been there in 1915. They pretended that *francs-tireurs* had fired upon their troops from the houses, and they had made an example with the *Grüindlichkeit* that characterizes all their methods. After that we understood why in this part of Austria the population, which shows a certain indifference when they are asked whether they prefer the Russians or the Austrians, reply in a very decisive manner when questioned as to their sentiments concerning the Germans.

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At Tarnopol, where we stopped for five minutes, we had the pleasure of discovering suddenly among the grey mass

of soldiers grouped at the corner of a street the red tassel that adorns the cap of the Belgian gunners. They were the blue police caps with red tassels of the soldiers of the Belgian armoured cars that have been on the Russian front more than two years. We spoke to them for a moment, and then said au revoir, for we were to see them that evening in their camp at Iezierna, where they were to follow us.

11. Our Visit to the 6th Corps.

The hours passed at Iezierna are among our happiest memories. Was it the delight of having found ourselves this time on a real battle front, was it the sympathetic cordiality with which General Nottbeck and his staff greeted us, or was it the presence of our fellow-countrymen of the Belgian armoured cars that seemed to take us back in a sense to our little country of the Yser? All these reasons, and something more—the extraordinarily enthusiastic reception that our propaganda met with from these troops of the 6th Army Corps.

Here we felt much nearer the front than in the General Headquarters of the armies or of the groups of armies through which we had just passed. We were made aware of that at once by the material details of life—by the improvised camping in the staff-offices of the corps, by the meals of the picnic order, where good appetite and gaiety on the part of the guests made up for the frugality of the dishes; but we were made aware of it also by the atmosphere of comradeship that reigned among the officers, whose mess reminded us of similar experiences in Belgium.

So we shared, for a day at least, the life at the front. Before seven o'clock in the morning a member of our party had already tasted Austrian fire, by flying in a Russian observation biplane over the enemy lines. Before midday we had taken a long walk with General Nottbeck to the first line of trenches, and for the first time in several months we heard again the familiar music of the shells and bullets.

But these excursions were not under-

taken mainly in a spirit of curiosity. Flying over the Austro-Turko-German lines at an altitude of from 800 to 900 metres along the whole line of the projected offensive, Lieutenant de Man had been able to make very interesting observations of the organization of that part of the front. And our visit to the trenches of the first line allowed us to take note of many details that it was interesting to know in order to appreciate the conditions in which the coming offensive would be undertaken.

We might sum up what we saw as follows :

We were surprised to find that the trenches and positions on the Russian front, or at least on that part of the front which we have seen and which we were told was typical, resemble much more what is to be seen on the western front than one would expect. The sector of Koniucki-Brzezany, notably, scarcely differs from that of a " calm " sector on the western front, except that in view of the comparative scarcity of artillery on a given front there are much fewer shell-holes and mine craters.

All the same, the proportion of daily losses per division is nearly the same as with us. We were told the number of killed and wounded daily during the recent months for all the divisions of the 6th Corps, which occupied what is supposed to be a "calm" sector; these totals are pretty much the same as those of a Belgian division for the same period. Their proportion of losses by infantry fire is rather more than ours.

It was easy to observe, on the other hand, that the enemy positions were much more strongly fortified than those of the Russians. Officers having visited different parts of the front, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, told us that it is the same thing everywhere. It is not that the Russians have fewer men to carry on their trench construction. On the contrary, they have just now an enormous numerical superiority. The number of the divisions on the battle front on June 1st was five to three, but allowing that the Russian divisions have much greater effectives than the German, Austrian, Turk, or Bulgarian divisions, the number

of Russians on the front is at least double that of their enemy. Let us not forget, moreover, that for one Russian soldier at the front there are at least four in the reserve camps or depots.

For the very reason that they are inferior in numbers the Austro-Germans have made a great effort by employing probably second-rate or tired troops to organize their front in such a manner as to obtain a maximum of defensive power with a minimum of men. In the sector where the offensive of the 1st of July was being prepared, for instance, the enemy trenches of the first line were a system of four, five, or six parallel lines, while the Russian trenches opposite formed in general only one or two. Moreover, the enemy trenches were much deeper than the Russian trenches. In short, what struck us most was the great abundance of barbed-wire entanglements that protected the Austrian positions for a great distance behind the first line. In some places where the Russian and Austrian trenches were relatively far apart —from 800 to 1,000 metres on the oppo-

site sides of a valley—the Austrian lines were protected by four continuous and parallel barbed-wire entanglements, ground-level entanglements and knife-rests predominating.

The contrast was striking, not only between the Austrian and Russian positions which were opposite, but also between the present lines held by the enemy and the former ones which have been successively abandoned, and which one meets, in some cases almost intact, between the present front and the Austro-Russian frontier. The new enemy front was infinitely stronger and better organized than any of their former fronts.

How can we explain the relative weakness of the Russian positions? Probably we must seek the chief motive in the industrial inferiority and poor means of transport. That is what determines at least the scarcity of concrete and barbed wire in the Russian trenches. But this explanation is not sufficient, for even with the available material—the stones on the ground and the wood of the forests that they had at hand—the Russians might have done

better, dug deeper trenches, fortified them more strongly, and constructed more comfortable and stronger dug-outs. Probably we must attribute this ineffective organization to the native indolence and the fatalist temperament of the Russian. There is, of course, a theoretical justification for this state of affairs. The Russian generals told us that if the enemy had constructed much stronger positions it was because the poverty of his effectives forced him to make a stronger defence, while the Russians, knowing the enemy too weak to attack and themselves preparing for an offensive, were content with parallel lines of trenches sufficiently well protected by barbed-wire entanglements to prevent the enemy from coming over freely during the night. But it is only just to say that those who explained that theory to us did not seem to be quite convinced themselves of its soundness.

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The Russian generals with whom we spoke took into account the fact that the proposed offensive would have to deal with material difficulties much more con-

siderable than those of the preceding years. It would obviously be necessary to make artillery preparations much more extensive than those of 1916 to destroy the first line of trenches and the barbed-wire entanglements before sending the infantry to the attack. They understood that necessity all the better since the soldiers who had taken part in the offensive of 1916 had never forgotten what it cost them to advance before the Austrian barbed-wire entanglements had been completely destroyed. General Nottbeck said to us: "This time the Russian infantry, before receiving the order to attack, must be freed from the least apprehension of finding the enemy barbed wire insufficiently demolished. When they ask us after the first day's bombardment of the enemy front if the moment for attack has come, we shall simply have to tell them to wait, and give them during the second day the sight of our bombardment reducing the enemy defences to naught. Then on the evening of the second day we shall tell them once more to wait, and it will only be after the third day's artillery

preparation, when they begin to get irritated by such a waste of shells, that we shall give the word : Forward ! "

The 6th Army Corps disposed for its artillery preparation on the part of the enemy's line that it was going to attack of about fifty rounds per metre of frontage. In short, in spite of the increased difficulties, the material conditions of the offensive seemed rather favourable to our Allies.

The chief problem seemed to be how best to deal with the *moral* of the troops. There were two aspects. The first question that we asked ourselves was this : In spite of the Léninist and German propaganda, in spite of the deceptive illusions aroused regarding the coming of the Messiah of Stockholm, had the Russian troops kept their will to fight sufficiently well to obey the order to attack ? And the second : Supposing that the will to fight still existed, would the discipline of the army, shaken by revolution, be sufficiently strong for operations to take place that would not degenerate into disorder, confusion, and disaster ?

In short, there were two questions to be dealt with, not wholly independent of each other, certainly, but distinct: the *moral* and the *discipline*.

12. The *Moral* of the Troops.

Of the *moral* of the troops we received at the 6th Army Corps, the 7th, and later at the Russian Army in Roumania, the very best impression.

At the three big meetings when we had addressed the troops of the 6th Army Corps and of the 11th Army—at Wymyslovka, at Iezierna, and at Tarnopol—the men were most enthusiastic.

The meeting at Wymyslovka had this peculiarity: it was held in a little Ruthuanian village, immediately behind the trenches. All the roads leading to the village were within sight of the enemy. Thus the troops came to the meeting-place in small detachments, and our automobiles, which raised clouds of dust, had to keep a certain distance from one another, so as not to arouse the suspicion of the Austrian observers. In spite of that, some

shrapnel did burst after we had passed, and wounded a soldier on the road behind us. But the meeting, at which four thousand troops were present, took place without any disagreeable interruptions in an orchard out of sight of the enemy. What struck us most there was to observe among the audience numerous soldiers taking down notes; they were the delegates from Soviets of distant units, who were thus going to let their comrades know what we had said.

Through delivering many speeches to these soldier audiences we had been able to make certain observations on the national psychology, and to find out which arguments were suitable and which were not, and the best method of presenting them. The interpreter's method of translating sentence by sentence gave us time to observe our audiences at our leisure, while the preceding sentence was being translated into Russian. The general conclusion to which we came was that we had to do with more naïve and simple audiences than the average popular audience of the West, but with none the less an extremely

quick intelligence, a ready appreciation of concrete facts, and an astonishing eagerness to learn something new. The infantry troops that we were addressing were all peasants, for the most part illiterate. Their character had the same mixture of *naïveté* and cunning that characterizes the peasant everywhere, but in a different proportion: rather more *naïveté* and less cunning. Combined with that, amazing good sense and a very great aptitude for following no matter what argument on condition that it be presented simply and in a concrete form.

A delightful example of this peasant simplicity, with the touch of cunning which frequently counterbalances it, was given us after the meeting at Iezierna by a Russian officer. Mixing among the soldiers, he had listened to the commentaries of two of them during my speech. I stopped after each sentence to give our interpreter time to translate. The interpreter was a Russian Socialist who had enlisted in the French army, and there had won his Lieutenant's stripes, the Legion of Honour, and the Croix de Guerre. His dignity, the

beauty of his fine light-blue uniform, with its row of decorations and stripes, evidently made a great impression on these two Russian soldiers, for the following dialogue took place :

" Who is that big officer in blue ? Is that not the Minister's staff officer ? "

" Not at all. Don't you know ? That is the King of the Belgians."

" Well then, the King of the Belgians is simply a fool. He does nothing but repeat what his Minister says."

After that will they tell us that in order to govern the Russian people it is necessary to have the prestige of a constitutional monarchy ?

To adapt our language to the intelligence of our public, we had ended by selecting different metaphors that seemed to produce the best impression. Here are a few examples :

" Tyranny in Europe is like a monster that we read of in old legends that had three heads. Every time that a brave knight destroyed one, another head grew up. To kill the monster it was necessary to destroy the three heads at once.

Well, the monster of European despotism has three heads. They are called Romanoff, Hohenzollern, and Habsburg. They are those of the Czar at Petrograd, the Czar at Berlin, and the Czar at Vienna. The Russian people have destroyed one of the three heads. But beware. It will grow again if they do not cut off the other two also."

And then:

"The Germans who try to fraternize with you are like the wolf that devoured little Red Riding Hood. The wolf, to deceive little Red Riding Hood, put on the nightcap and the spectacles of the grandmother. 'Why have you such large eyes?' asked little Red Riding Hood. 'The better to see you with, my child,' said the wolf. 'Why have you such large ears, grandmother?' 'The better to hear you with.' 'Why have you such long teeth, grandmother?' 'The better to eat you with, my child.' And the wolf devoured the too trustful child. And so beware of the German wolf! While he is trying to deceive you with fine words, he is getting ready to devour you."

Or else the following metaphor, suggested by General Nottbeck :

" The Russian people, having made its Revolution, is like a bird that has been imprisoned too long, and whose cage has just been opened. Blinded by the light, unaccustomed to flying, he flaps his wings and flies to the right or to the left, stupidly hitting his beak against the windows, and hurting his wings against all obstacles. It would seem as if he must fall exhausted, and be picked up and put back into his cage, but suddenly he sees the light through a wide-open window, and this time he flies strong and straight before him to the open air, leaving his prison for ever behind him. . . ."

And then as a peroration :—

" Pacifist agitators will tell you that the Germans and the Austrians ask nothing better than a revolution, and the right to follow the red flag, and free themselves from the yoke of their Czars. Well, they will soon be able to prove the truth of their words. When you go over the top of your trenches, carrying before you the red standard of liberty, with the device :

'No Annexations! No contributions of war! The right for all nations to dispose of themselves!' If they are sincere, they will follow your standard and march with you to Berlin and Vienna to dethrone the Emperor and establish their liberty. But should they fire on you, and insult the red flag, will you let them do so? No, it is you yourself then who will go and plant it in their cities, bringing liberty to your enemies on the point of your bayonets!"

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Such words always aroused a storm of applause. At the meeting at Iezierna, the enthusiasm was beyond all bounds; even General Nottbeck was borne shoulder-high in triumph and tossed in the air in the Russian fashion. We were frequently submitted to this treatment ourselves, which is, it seems, the orthodox method of showing enthusiasm. It consists of seizing the object, or rather the victim, of their enthusiasm in twenty pairs of strong arms, which, with a rythmical movement broken by wild cries, fling him into the air as high as possible, as if he were shot

from a catapult. Then the muscles relax and the arms form as it were a mattress, into which the victim falls, only to be flung up in the air again immediately, and so on. General Nottbeck submitted to this treatment with the stoicism of a real soldier, his body stiff, his face immovable, his hand at the salute. I am convinced that we Belgians, unaccustomed to this type of enthusiasm, made but a piteous figure the first time we underwent it. The first day of our arrival in Petrograd I was the victim of the enthusiasm of the sailors of the Black Sea, and my colleagues told me after all that was seen after the first leap in the air was a collar and two cuffs waving wildly, and a heap of clothes, presumably containing a man. Afterwards we got on better, for one becomes accustomed to everything, even to Russian enthusiasm.

This enthusiasm, moreover, sometimes takes a less disconcerting form. We had a memorable example at a meeting at Iezierna. It was a wonderful scene. It was at dusk on these wide Galician Steppes, night was falling when the meeting ended. The applause continued until our

motor-car, to which the strong shoulders of the soldiers had borne us, had left the meeting-place to return across country to the General Headquarters.

Suddenly a group of Cossacks, who had been listening at a little distance from the crowd, mounted on their horses, put them to the gallop, and executed round our motor-car a kind of fantastic dance, only stopping when their horses gave out. One of them went on after the others, and for long we could see his silhouette, like some centaur wheeling round us in the dusk uttering hoarse shouts.

Once more we endeavoured, after such memorable scenes, not to let ourselves be carried away by the impression of the moment, and to draw only prudent conclusions from these manifestations, but when we heard the men, as the officers of the Belgian armoured car whom General Nottbeck had tactfully invited to meet us at dinner that evening, affirm that as far as they knew, and speaking at least for the 7th Army Corps, the *moral* of the men had never been better since the Russian Revolution, we were compelled to believe

them. Their opinion, corroborated by that of others, with whom we talked, was undoubtedly of considerable value, since they had been fighting for two years with the Russian troops in Galicia.

Moreover, General Nottbeck himself, who up till then had preserved a phlegmatic calm that justified his British origin, yielded finally to the excitement of these enthusiastic scenes, and when we bade him farewell and were climbing into the automobile which was to take us to Czernowitz, it was with visible emotion that he said to us in shaking hands, "*Now*, I have confidence."

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But that such a confidence be justified, we must look for something more than enthusiasm, more than the applause of audiences, three weeks before the attack. The hierarchical organization of the army is necessary, its moral cohesion, the spirit of subordination and of responsibility must be such that this enthusiasm runs no risk of being wasted or transformed into panic at the first check. In short, there must be a certain minimum of discipline, and

that is the second part of the problem of the moral reconstruction of the Russian front. It is, we must admit, the more delicate and difficult, and it is, moreover, not easy for observers, more or less superficial, to give a definite opinion.

We need not deny that the first effect of Revolution on the army was purely destructive. The Russian armies were certainly reduced even before the Revolution to lamentable impotence, because of the disorganization and the demoralization of the nation, for which the Czar's rule was to blame, and which was, moreover, the cause of its downfall. In this point of view the Revolution only brought to light a deplorable situation, which, had it been prolonged, would have led Russia inevitably to a separate peace.

But at least the army held together. It kept its outward appearance, thanks to the discipline, to the blind obedience that reigned in it. The Revolution put an end to this discipline completely, upsetting the hierarchy on which it was based. Now it is quite true that the Russian army may have gained enormously by replacing this

form of hierarchy, which had become unbearable, by a new hierarchy conforming to democratic ideas, but it is equally certain that the fighting power of an army without any sort of discipline is inferior to that of a disciplined army, no matter how imperfect that discipline may be.

The Russian army is a proof of this. Some days after the Revolution the Germans, with the greatest ease, cut in pieces, on Stokhod, several Russian regiments, whose Soviet during the attack were discussing what steps it were best to take. While Bolschewiki and Menschewiki were making speeches and trying to come to an agreement, or not to come to an agreement, on the principles of strategy and revolutionary tactics, the Germans were massacring thousands of men and striking panic among the survivors.

It seems certain that the first idea of the Revolution was to replace completely this former " autocratic " rule of the officers by a new so-called " democratic " rule, that of the Soviets. During the first week of the revolutionary era, the Soviets that had been formed in the smallest units,

while leaving the officers nominally in power, claimed and exercised in reality the power which had belonged to them.

To realize that such a state of things could not last, we need not go very deeply into the question. We have but to ask ourselves how such quasi-parliamentary institutions as the Soviets could be usefully incorporated in the organization of a modern army. The system adopted left all responsibility to the officers, while giving all the power to irresponsible assemblies, who even claimed the direction of strategic operation, or, to be more exact, non-operations. This system was given a trial, negative, it must be admitted, in the domain of military tactics at Stokhod, and in the domain of the internal discipline of the units at the front. But little by little the force of facts compelled them to admit that the power of the Soviets must be limited, in a large measure the authority of the officers re-established.

We can see now that the former hierarchy had simply suffered a partial eclipse. At first it was a total eclipse, but that did not last. The partial eclipse will probably last. The present *régime* is a co-existence,

imperfectly organized as yet and full of illogisms, of the two methods of discipline, the former hierarchy and that of the Soviet.

Indeed, there is one strong factor that we must take into account in the Russian army. It is habit, custom handed down by tradition and endorsed by common sense.

In Petrograd we were given *à propos* of this a typical instance. The rebel sailors of Kronstadt had massacred many of their officers, a certain number of whom were brutes, deserving no better fate; they then threw the survivors into prison. They announced that the Germans were their brothers. They declared that they would only obey those of their own class, whom they had chosen freely. Now these same sailors continued all the same their service of guarding the coast, just as before. They would have been, no doubt, rather embarrassed had the necessity arisen to attack a German torpedo boat, but as for the daily routine of service they were simply obeying an illogical but tyrannical habit.

This same force of moral inertia has made itself felt in the army.

The most noticeable sign lies in the continued signs of outward respect.

In the rear, it is true, no soldier salutes an officer. This is one of the first innovations of the Revolution. The right not to salute, a reform which probably was welcomed with equal joy by officers as by men, for they can scarcely have relished the necessity in going through the streets of Petrograd or Moscow, crowded with troops, of constantly returning the salute. Be that as it may, in the rear the soldiers make it a point of honour not to salute any officer. On the front, on the contrary, we did not come across one soldier who did not salute his officer. Such a situation is all the more striking because the famous decree of June, of the minister Kerensky, on the "Rights of Soldiers," strange and provisional mixture of the hierarchical tradition and democratic idealism, proclaims that saluting an officer is not an act of duty, but a mere act of voluntary courtesy.

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We met few officers who did not tell us that, in spite of the relaxation of former

discipline, the daily routine was carried on almost as well as under the Czarist *régime*. That is partly owing to the Soviets and partly in spite of them. In spite of the Soviets, because at the beginning of the revolutionary era they systematically sapped the prestige of the recognized authorities of the army, which constitute, after all, the sole responsible authority competent to deal with all questions of military tactics, properly so called.

The Soviets, in a whole series of questions of internal discipline, have obtained from the soldier better obedience by replacing the former slavish obedience by a new and more spontaneous discipline with a more direct bearing on the needs and views of the men.

They have had a weakening influence when they introduced into the conduct of military operations and the general direction of the army, an element of parliamentary deliberation, political discussion being incompatible with the principles imposed by the necessities of war, which demand unity of command, centralization of responsibilities, and rapid decisions.

But they have had and continue to have a good effect when they limit their power to what seems rightly their moral domain, the participation in disciplinary justice and the control of the administration of units.

At the time of writing no officer had the right to punish a soldier. For that the decision of the Soviet, composed of the commandant of the unit and three delegates chosen by the subalterns and soldiers, was necessary.

We can see at a glance that this organization is still, in its present form, both imperfect and provisional.

But it is all the more interesting to hear such officers as we have questioned on the matter, even those who by their military training might be less disposed to approve of democratic Utopianism, proclaiming that the Soviets have already rendered them great service from a disciplinary point of view. We were given several examples, which showed that very often the Soviets of units, for infringement of discipline, inflicted more severe punishments than those meted out by the "autocratic" leaders of other days. Let us add, that these

punishments inflicted on the soldiers by their own comrades, having a greater moral effect, discipline has generally improved.

In what concerns internal administration, all the officers whom we questioned, especially Generals Broussiloff, Korniloff, and Nottbeck, did not hide their opinions that the authority of the Soviets, especially since it was limited to certain questions, constituted in their eyes a real advance on the old discipline. The domain in which their influence is most beneficial is the control of internal administration of units, participation in the control of the Commissariat, in the organizing of reliefs, sentry duty, recreation, and in the political education of the soldiers.

In short, it seems that this institution, after having been, during the first days of the Revolution, an instrument of dissolution of established authority, has gradually modified its character, tacitly abdicated from certain of its extreme ambitions, and may be in a fair way not to take the place of the hierarchical discipline, but by controlling it and collaborating with it, to become a useful organ for the maintenance

of discipline, and the reorganization of the army.

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This evolution is, of course, only in its infancy. The stage of maturity at which it has arrived apparently varies greatly in different parts of the Russian army. At the time of our mission in Russia it presented a strange spectacle of a provisional amalgam full of surprises and contradictions, a mixture of the old iron discipline and the democratic and fraternal customs of the new *régime*.

We had an amazing example of the curious contrast that this transition offers during our last visit to the Russian troops at the front. We had reached Roumania, after having said farewell to the 6th Army Corps in an open-air meeting at Tarnapol, and visited at Czernowitz General Korniloff, Commandant of the 8th Army. After two days spent with the Roumanian army we saw a review on the front at Tereth of two regiments of Russian infantry, the 57th and the 59th, with General Tcherbatcheff in command.

The review had taken place with a

correct discipline that would have made the Potsdam guard or the guard of Buckingham Palace green with envy. Frenchmen who were present, and who had seen this military ceremony at Tsarskoïe Selo, under the former *régime*, told us that this review was exactly like these used to be. The troops marched in companies in impeccable lines, singing their battle songs. These choruses, set for several voices, with each rank singing its part in the strong, beautiful voices peculiar to the Russians, keep admirable time with their march. After the march past the men presented arms, keeping their orderly lines so exactly that the men in the second rank had the point of their bayonets just at the neck of the leaders of the file.

To listen to our speech, the troops then formed a square with remarkable rapidity, and during the whole meeting remained at attention, without moving a rifle, without a man stirring. But immediately the parade was over, when we were to have a conference with the Soviets of the two regiments, the military authorities who accompanied us—the Chief of the Rou-

manian General Staff, General Tcherbatcheff, General Berthelot, and General Cumont, Chief of the Belgian military mission in Roumania—went away, to give us full liberty to discuss with the officers and the soldier delegates who, mixing together fraternally, surrounded us. We replied to their questions, and finally they gave a touching demonstration of their respect and enthusiasm for Belgium. Then we saw the officers and soldiers, who had just half an hour before given us so admirable an example of discipline, embrace each other cordially. A Russian soldier, whose speech in French—he had formerly been a student at Nancy—had greatly moved Generals Tcherbatcheff, Berthelot, and Cumont, who had now returned and mingled with the crowd, was embraced by the three Generals, while the Colonel of the 57th Regiment, a fine old man, who had been wounded four times, was borne aloft in triumph by the soldiers. Finally the Generals present—those same Generals who had no longer the right to put a man in cells without the intervention of the police and the Soviets—were borne in triumph

among cries of "Long live Russian Liberty!" "Long live Belgium!" "Long live Socialism!" "Long live the International!"

Then what General Nottbeck had said several days before recurred to our minds: "To-day, you see, Generals have much harder work than formerly; then they only gave orders, now they must give speeches. They know that their men will only march if their leaders can convince them of the necessity. I think men so convinced fight better than those who merely obeyed orders which they did not understand. But shall we succeed this time in convincing them? That is the whole question. After all it is on us, the leaders, that the answer depends."

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICAL SITUATION

WE had a threefold aim in going to Russia. In the first place to join our efforts to those of Thomas, Henderson, and other Socialists from the Allied countries, against the tendency which seemed to exist in certain circles in favour of either a separate peace or of bringing pressure to bear on the Allies to obtain peace at any price. In the second place, to bring before our Russian comrades the case of Belgium and the situation of the Belgian workmen, to appeal to their solidarity in this struggle that we were carrying on against German Imperialism. Lastly, to take up a definite attitude on the subject of the proposed Conference, or, more correctly, the Conferences at Stockholm.

1. The Separate Peace.

We have already stated that no one in Russia seemed to consider a separate peace seriously. The Extremists themselves recognized that if Russia deserted the Allied cause she would be constrained to take up arms against them with Germany, in which conditions their desire for peace would not be gratified. But we were bound to observe, on the other hand, that German propaganda was active, that many Socialists were ultra-Pacifists, that after three years of war there is a considerable feeling of war weariness among a large part of the population. Zimmerwald's theories have still, even now, a considerable influence on the Soviet, and even on certain members of the Provisional Government, who were, before accepting their present responsibilities, militant Zimmerwaldiens.

Still, during our short stay in Russia, it was possible already to notice the change which has since become more apparent in the feeling of the masses as among their Socialist leaders.

In the early days of the Revolution,

which took place almost entirely in the capital, it was the Soviet of Petrograd alone that spoke and decided in the name of the workmen and soldiers of the whole country. The Extremists are represented there in a minority, but in an aggressive and determined minority. The Moderates are especially moderate when it is a question of an energetic carrying on of the war. There are, in this revolutionary commune, many foreigners, Cosmopolitans, Jews especially, hiding under a borrowed name their German origin, but who cannot regard as their fatherland a country where they have scarcely known anything but persecution.

But soon the Soviet of Petrograd took second place. It gradually became a local assembly, very influential, certainly, but whose influence was henceforth limited. The Congress of Peasants met. The Congress of the Soviets of all Russia assembled in its turn. The feeling there is quite different. Provincial elements bring to it a breath of national enthusiasm. They are longing for peace, certainly, for the country is war weary, and peasants and soldiers

demand that they may have as soon as possible the right to taste the fruits of their Revolution, but they will not at any price accept a separate peace and a German peace.

On the other hand, among the leaders, the Revolution is taking place still more rapidly. Kerensky in his propaganda unites indissolubly the Revolution with national defence. Skobekeff and Tschernoff, in unofficial conversations, protested against any idea of a premature peace. Amongst the more advanced of the Cadets and the more political of the Socialists there is an obvious desire for closer union.

Tseretelli is, perhaps, in young Russia, the one who remains most faithful to Zimmerwaldian theories, and it is Tseretelli who, with Skobeleff, demands the expulsion of Grimm, the President of Zimmerwald. It is he who first asked that strong measures be taken, when, on June 2nd, the Léninists announced their intention of making an armed manifestation in the streets of Petrograd, and it was with his support that Kerensky made his great effort to renew in the Russian

army the will to carry through the great offensive.

In short, we believe we are justified in saying that among the Socialists, the great majority of whom have broken with the Extremists, a revolution is taking place, very like that which took place with President Wilson. Like the latter, they wish a peace "without victory," that is to say, in reality without conquests. But they wished, and they still wish, a just and durable peace. Now, in face of the attitude of the Central Powers, they have been forced to admit that the road to this peace is necessarily by war. When we were leaving Petrograd, one of us made a note in his diary: "They still speak of peace, but they are preparing for an offensive; to-morrow they will make this offensive to achieve peace." Events since then have confirmed these prophecies, and it was not their fault if their first victories had no morrow.

2. Their Sympathies for Belgium.

What struck us most, perhaps, during this trip, where there was so much to

astonish us, was the great sympathy shown for the Belgians. We had thought, truth to tell, that for the greater part of Russia our little country was only a place on the map, but they soon convinced us of the contrary.

Many of them had completed their studies at Liége and other Belgian Universities. They knew our "Houses of the People." They had been inspired by our co-operative system to follow our example. They had translated our Socialist literature, and especially did they remember what Belgium had done at the beginning of the war, and they were infinitely grateful to the Belgians for opposing the German armies when they themselves were attacked at the other side of Europe.

We had scarcely passed the frontier before we were given a striking proof of their feeling towards us.

It was in the dining-car of the train between Stockholm and Petrograd. Our neighbours at table were two army doctors returning from Germany. They took us for Frenchmen, and spoke in a friendly way of France. In the midst of our con-

versation some remark revealed the fact that we were Belgians. Immediately their faces lit up with smiles. They rose to their feet and insisted on calling for wine to drink to the health of the defenders of Liége. We realized that our little country of Belgium held a big place in the heart of great Russia, and this first impression was daily strengthened.

We have already spoken of the welcome of the masses given us at Petrograd. We have told of the extraordinary enthusiasm that the presence of the Belgian Labour and Socialist delegates aroused at the front. We can still recall the touching reception that we received at Moscow from the members of the Municipal Douma.

But nowhere, perhaps, were we made so aware of the depth of this sympathy as on the day of our departure, when we were bidding farewell to the Congress of Soviets.

The assembly was being held on the left side of the Neva, in the Cadet School, with which Kropotkin's Memoirs had made us familiar. The heart of the working population of Russia was there, six hundred delegates representing their different bodies

and all the different views of the Socialist proletariat. Tscheidze presided. Kerensky and Tseretelli were beside him. Before us in the first row was the General Staff of the Léninists, the small group of Trotsky's friends, the Extreme Left of the Revolution.

Never had the political situation been more strained. The very day before, the insurrection of the Extremists had seemed inevitable, and it was expected every day, though it did not take place for some weeks, and in this silent, gloomy assembly, as divided against itself as the Commune or the Convention in their worst days, one might well ask if there could be one thought in common.

That question was answered in a striking way when President Tscheidze addressed to us these simple words: "Tell our Belgian comrades that the cause of Belgium is as dear to us as the cause of the Russian Revolution." From every bench applause broke forth, and for one moment at least there was complete unity.

The partisans of Lénin and those of Kerensky, all Revolutionary Russia, greeted Socialist Belgium!

3. The Stockholm Conference.

It might be as well to recall here that at the time of our visit to Russia there was under discussion at Stockholm not only one conference, but three. In the first place, that of the Zimmerwaldians; in the second, that of the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee, in the third that of the Petrograd Soviet. Of the first we will say nothing. Grimm's International is not ours. There remain the two others.

A. *The Dutch-Scandinavian Committee.*

When the Russian Revolution took place, Stockholm became necessarily the half-way house of the Socialists, and in a general way of all travellers between Petrograd and Paris or London, Berlin, or Vienna. It was since the defeat of the Serbians the only road to Russia, the only road to rejoin the Trans-Siberian Railway and go round the world.

We know in what conditions the Dutch Delegation of the Socialist International Bureau decided to take up its abode there.

Since the beginning of the war the

German aggression has more or less suspended the existence of the International. Belgium, where it used to have its headquarters, was invaded. The Maison du Peuples at Brussels, where its offices were, was guarded by German sentries. Its Executive Committee was scattered and could not meet. The President was at Havre, member of the Committee of Public Safety—that is what the Belgian Government has become; his colleagues, Bertrand and Anseele, could not leave their town without a special permit from the Kommandantur, and it was in such conditions, in a strenuous struggle for their national existence, that Belgian Socialists had still before them the duty of keeping alive the sacred fire of the International, of maintaining a bond, however feeble, between the working classes of every country, both neutral and belligerent.

Camille Huysmans, the secretary of the International Socialist Bureau, undertook this difficult task.

He began with the Dutch. He had admitted, in spite of the reservations of the French, that the Dutch Delegation

should be joined to the Executive Committee provisionally for the duration of the war. He crossed the frontier and installed his secretariat at The Hague.

From the beginning, under the influence of their leader Troelstra, the Dutch Committee began a persevering campaign for the re-establishment of international relations.

In Entente circles Troelstra was generally considered Germanophile. He denied the accusation energetically. But the least that can be said is that his neutrality certainly looked kindly on the Socialist Democrats of the Central Empires, and that in a country where the Left party were mostly "Ententists" he seemed to have rather a tendency to lean to the other side.

A Scandinavian Socialist said to us, "The Vorstand of Berlin has two branches: one at Copenhagen, the other at The Hague."

We must frankly admit that in their efforts to reconstruct, even at the present hour, international relations, the Dutch and Danish Socialists were influenced chiefly by their wish to put an end to the horrors of a

war which seemed to them could only end in an indefinite result.

But, none the less, in the present state of things their efforts profited—voluntarily or involuntarily—Germany, and in these conditions their policy could not but excite the suspicions and mistrust of the Allied countries.

Just after the Russian Revolution, however, circumstances seemed more favourable to their action.

The Petrograd Soviet declared for peace without annexations or contributions. The German and Austrian Socialist Democrats declared themselves ready to accept this formula on condition that they interpreted it in the same sense as von Hindenburg; and in Great Britain, and especially in France, an increasing minority declared themselves in favour of taking up again international relationships. In neutral countries, Socialists were unanimous for peace, and hoped to achieve it by a general Conference.

In the beginning of April the Danish put their irons in the fire. The Socialist Minister Stanning wrote to the International Socialist Bureau that if the Executive

Committee were not willing to act, or could not act, the Conference would take place without them. The members of the Dutch Delegation, on receiving this letter, and without waiting to obtain the opinion of their Belgian colleagues, decided to set out for Stockholm. They went viâ Germany. Huysmans, who signed on as a steward on a Dutch boat, was not long in joining them, and installed the secretary's office of the B.S.I. in the Trade Union House of the Socialist Party of Sweden.

Immediately, Hjalmar Branting, the Swedish Socialist leader, insisted that the convoking of a full Conference should not be left to the sole initiative of the Dutch Delegation. A convocation by the International Socialist Bureau was not possible, since the permanent members of the Executive Committee could not meet. They finally decided, in agreement with the Norwegians and the Danes, to create the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee, with the right of calling a full meeting of the International as soon as possible.

In the meantime our delegation went to Stockholm and got into touch with the

new Committee. We immediately declared the complete hostility of the Belgian Labour Party to a full meeting which would force them to meet the German Socialist Majority. But we added that separate interviews of the Organizing Committee with the different sections of the International might be useful. They would facilitate explanations or necessary declarations; they would oblige the Socialists of all countries engaging in the war to express their views on the situation; they would permit neutral countries to make a united statement on the situation. These interviews have since taken place.

Most of the Socialist bodies took part in them, and notably two bodies of the German Social Democracy.

The memorandum of Scheidemann and his friends was published, with the reply from Albert Thomas.

The greeting that the members of the Committee gave to the declaration of the German Majority was, it seems, anything but favourable, and it seems almost as if this greeting had something to do with the effort that Scheidemann made on his

return for the democratization and parliamentarization of Germany.

As for the Social Democratic Minority, represented by Kautsky, Bernstein, Hanse, Ledebour, they had at least the merit of speaking out plainly.

We cannot, unfortunately, divulge their verbal declarations without putting them in a difficult position.

What can be repeated, however, is that they stated that in their opinion, though at present their action was met with formidable obstacles, they were sure whenever peace was declared to have the immense majority of the German working classes with them; that the aggressive tone of the Allies' Note in reply to President Wilson made their propaganda very difficult. On the other hand, they denounced the absence of sincerity in the protestations in favour of the rights of the people of Scheidemann and his supporters, when the Majority Socialists were in reality in the service of a fatal Imperialist and Militarist policy—fatal both for Germany and for Europe.

From these declarations, which seem to

have strongly impressed all those who heard them, little remains in the memorandum drawn up for the public. But we must in justice remember that on leaving Stockholm the Minority Socialists had to return to Germany.

The Dutch-Scandinavian Committee received French and British delegates. They met the delegation from German Austria, who voiced almost entirely the opinion of the Germans. They noted also the declarations of the Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Tcheco-Slav Socialists, who, contrary to their allies, pronounced in favour of reparation for Belgium, and reparation at the expense of Germany.

These interviews ended, there remained the question of the full Conference, but the Soviet on its side convoked an International Conference, and it was decided that all must await the arrival of the Russian delegates from Petrograd.

B. *The Petrograd Soviet.*

When we arrived in Russia, Albert Thomas and de Brouckère, who had gone in advance, were already in communication

with the Soviet, which had just delivered its convocation to Stockholm for a Conference distinct from that of the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee. We joined them, and at our first meeting drew up a note clearly expressing the point of view of the Belgian delegation. This note contained (1) our interpretation of the peace formula of the Provisional Russian Government, especially in what concerned Belgium ; (2) the explanation of the motives that led us to consider a full meeting, to which would be admitted those who held the present policy of the Socialist Majority in the Central Empires, would be both useless and dangerous.

After sending off this note the *pourparlers* were interrupted, Thomas having gone to Moscow and thence to the front ; but during his absence we had the opportunity of learning facts that it would be interesting to make public, could one write freely the complete history of the Stockholm Conference. Although many Socialists in France and Great Britain judged this Conference to be undesirable, it had in certain diplomats open partisans, espe-

cially preoccupied with humouring the Russians. They were afraid of their meeting with the Germans only. The opinion was expressed that Socialists of the Allied countries ought also to attend this Conference to plead energetically the cause of the Western Democracies.

It seemed, indeed, at one time as if Albert Thomas were of this opinion, and that he had said so to his friends, Moutet and Cachin; but the latter, very much impressed by the Russian Revolution, went further, and on their return to France advised enthusiastically the national duty of the Socialist party to attend the Conference without making any stipulation or accepting any guarantee. We know what followed.

Thomas returned to Petrograd when the news reached Russia from France. We found him very much upset by the clearly hostile welcome that Parliamentary opinion gave to the idea of a meeting with the German Majority Socialists.

The same evening we had an interview with him, along with Henderson, who had just arrived from London.

It was understood that in a reply to the convocation of the Soviet we should announce our refusal to take part in a full Conference, and we drew up, in common agreement, the conditions clearly enough to make sure there would be no mistake and to put an end to any diplomatic manœuvre on the part of our adversaries. "More than ever," said our letter, "are we convinced that a meeting to which would be admitted those who supported the *present* policy of the Majority Socialists in the Central Empires would be useless and dangerous; useless because such a meeting of contrary views could not end in action; dangerous because it would give rise to misunderstanding, and would lead the working and peasant classes to think that a just and durable peace was possible before aggressive Imperialism is destroyed.

"As long as by a public declaration made without reticence or reservation in their own country, on the responsibility of their own working classes, the Socialists of all nations interested have not renounced their association with an aggressive Imperialism,

we hold that an International Socialist Conference would be morally impossible."

Some days later, in another letter to the Soviet, Henderson, anxious to see the Socialists of the Allied countries clearly define their points of view, announced the convocation in London for the middle of July of a Conference of the Socialists of the Allied nations.

About the same time we had a long conversation in a friend's house with Skobeleff, Kerensky, and Tseretelli, who was, and who still is, we believe, the President of the Committee of Foreign Affairs at the Soviet.

Tseretelli, who had begun by taking a high hand, imagining that the services rendered to Socialism by the Russian Revolution gave him, in a sense, the right to pose as arbiter in an International Conference, seemed very much impressed when we told him that we would not allow it to take place. Finally, he promised us, in his own name, to insist with the Soviet that delegates be sent to London with a view to acquiring information and coming to an understanding on the conditions of

admission to the Conference which would prevent the attendance of Imperialistic Socialists.

Did he go back on his word, or did he fail in his effort ?

The fact remains that a few days later we received from the Soviet a reply which maintained the terms of the former convocation.

We were at the front when this letter was sent to us. Thomas, who was returning to France, received it as he was leaving. He insisted on going on with the matter, but maintaining the point of view we had come to together.

It was in such a frame of mind that, before leaving Petrograd, we sent to the Soviet a last note, which summed up the former documents, and of which this is the text:

To the Executive Committee of the Council of Workmen and Soldiers' Deputies at Petrograd.

HONOURED FRIENDS,—

On our return from the Russian front, where the delegates of Socialist

Belgium met with a fraternal and enthusiastic welcome, we found waiting for us the letter that has been sent to us by the Executive Committee of the Soviet between the 1st of May and the 13th of June. Your point of view in what concerns the preparation for, and the aim of, the International Conference could be summed up in the following terms :

(1) The responsibility for the horrors of the World War rests on International Imperialism.
(2) The workmen of the whole world must unite in this struggle against Imperialistic influences and in the struggle in favour of peace.
(3) The peace conditions must be on the following lines : " A general peace without annexations or contributions, founded on the right of nations to dispose of themselves."

In our former letters we have already stated our agreement with this formula, on the express condition, of course, that it does not exclude either the integral resti-

tution of land, as in Belgium, which has been the object of an unjustifiable act of aggression, nor the liberation, the disannexation, of territories which have been annexed against the will and the imprescriptible right of their inhabitants. What you say, moreover, in that which concerns Alsace-Lorraine and the indemnities due to Belgium, Poland, etc., seems to indicate, and we are very glad to know this, that our points of view in this respect are the same.

On the other hand, we are forced now to make the most definite reservation on the other points of view which serve as the basis of your convocation.

Certainly we agree with the first Inter-Allied Conference of London that all Imperialistic Powers have their share of responsibility in the present conflict. Imperialistic International Capitalism has brought about the antagonism that made war possible, but it is the semi-feudal Imperialism of the Central Powers which let loose the catastrophe. They alone have not found among their democracy the resistance which would have made such aggression impossible. Moreover, we can

never admit that a comparison can be made between those who have deliberately prepared, provoked, declared war, and those who have submitted to it by remaining faithful to their international engagements, like Belgium, or nations that, like France, as Jaurès publicly declared on the eve of his death, did all in human power to prevent it.

On the other hand, though none more than ourselves hope for the union of the working classes of the whole world against all Imperialistic tendencies, how could we count seriously on the German Majority Socialists uniting themselves with us in this struggle, when their whole policy for the last three years has been but one long abdication, who have in the most open manner joined with their Kaiser, and who, after having witnessed the martyrdom of Belgium, after having become accomplices by their silence in all the claims of Prussian militarism, go to-day to Stockholm or elsewhere to sound public opinion for the Imperial Chancellor?

To unite ourselves with them under these conditions would be a moral im-

possibility. It is not only our opinion, it is the opinion of Mehring and of all Socialists who, even in Germany, have remained faithful to the principle of the International.

That is why we persist more than ever in thinking that alone there can and ought to be admitted to an International Conference those who publicly in their own country, speaking on behalf of the working classes, shall in acts as well as in deeds break with the Imperialistic policy of their Governments.

Recent events, moreover, have just shown that one cannot be sufficiently prudent if one would evade the ambush of those Imperialists who hide their real face beneath a beautiful mask, and consciously or unconsciously, under the guise of Socialism, play the game of German Imperialism.

In such conditions, before continuing our *pourparlers*, it would be desirable to refer to our mandates and to come into contact with the Socialists of the other Allied countries. The Conference that our British comrades are proposing to bring together shortly in London will give us

such an opportunity. We earnestly hope to see you there, and we believe that the negotiations that we have entered upon may be more usefully carried out when the Conference of London will have made known the opinions shared by all the working classes of the Allied countries.

Fraternally yours,

(Signed) VANDERVELDE and
DE BROUCKÈRE.

4. SUMMING-UP AND CONCLUSIONS.

In short, the Russian Revolution did not accept the inheritance of the former Government on condition of not being held liable with regard to its agreements with the Allies. But one can have confidence in the Provisional Government when it declares that it will remain faithful to the Pact of London and that it is unanimously opposed to any idea of a separate peace.

On the other hand, we can honestly say that from the point of view of Belgian propaganda the success of our mission exceeded our greatest hopes.

The question, which was always a delicate one, of the International Conference of Stockholm remains to be discussed. The Belgian delegation had been able to come to an agreement on the common attitude to be taken up with Albert Thomas and Henderson. But afterwards the latter was won over to agree to a consultative Conference, and in any case up to the present the Russians remain immovable.

When we were in Petrograd they seemed to have a kind of Messianic faith in the Conference. They believed that the prestige of their Revolution would put them in a position to impose their peace formula on the other Socialist parties, including the German Majority Socialists. They were upheld in this by the acquiescence of the last French National Council. They knew, perhaps, that in other Allied countries the idea of going to Stockholm to explain their views to the Germans found sympathy in high places. Moreover, such men as Tseretelli and Kerensky, whose point of view, at bottom, was very like our own, were persuaded that every effort in favour of the Stockholm

Conference would strengthen their influence in view of an energetic pursuance of the war. Thus they persisted up to the last in attempting to gain our adherence.

"In refusing," Tseretelli said to us, almost with tears in his eyes, "you are taking away the brightest ray of hope from our horizon."

And Kerensky added:

"You are making more difficult the propaganda we were carrying on for the coming offensive."

Let us add that soon after, when we were repeating the latter remark to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Teretschenko, adding that it seemed paradoxical to us to suppose that, to induce the Russian soldiers to fight, one must put before them the idea of a conference in favour of peace, his answer was:—

"It may be paradoxical, but Kerensky is right. Just now our soldiers would rather fight for nothing than for some definite object."

It was not only in Petrograd that a general Conference was eagerly demanded. The same thing was going on in Stockholm,

where the Dutch, such as Vliegen or Van Kol, whose Entente sympathies were obvious, tried to convince us with an insistence which had a touch of national egotism. With rare exceptions, the neutrals are, on the whole, for the Allies, but they are governed by the fear of being sooner or later drawn into the conflict.

This statement would not be complete if we did not give the main points of an interview which we had on our way through Christiania with Hjalmar Branting, who is certainly, of all the Socialists in neutral countries, the most influential and the one who shares most nearly our own point of view.

His views, which Huysmans shared, can be summed up in the following words :

" You would be wrong not to come to a general Conference. Except for the Danish and the Dutch, all the Socialists of neutral countries sympathize with the Socialists of the Entente. There are serious cracks in the solidarity of Central Europe. The Bulgarian Socialists, who were ignorant of all that was happening on the West, were

much impressed when they learnt the cause of the war, the conditions in which Belgian neutrality had been violated, and the horrors committed in that country. In the same way the Hungarian Socialists, and especially the Czechs, have clearly separated their cause from that of the German Majority. They demand that not only shall Belgium be reconstructed, but reconstructed by Germany. They demand the independence of the three Polands; they hold that energetic action must be taken against the Imperialism of their Governments. As for the German Minority Socialists, they would be the most energetic supporters of the Allies against David, Scheidemann, and their supporters. In these conditions, if—and this is indispensable—the first point brought up were the examination of the causes and the responsibilities of the war, if you came and demanded justice, it is certain that the German Majority Socialists would find themselves practically isolated and that the immense majority of the Conference would force them into the position of either agreeing or resigning."

I have thought it wise to reproduce in full the arguments which were put before us in favour of a general Conference, but they did not convince us.

Our objections remain to-day more than ever unsurmountable.

Certainly, in admitting that the holding of a Conference might be possible of realization, it is probable that there would be a unanimous statement in favour of the independence of Belgium, and that the immense majority would demand integral restoration by Germany. It would be the same possibly for the reconstruction of Serbia and Roumania, the total evacuation of France, the withdrawal on the part of the Germans from all attempts, direct or indirect, at annexation.

But it would obviously not be the same for the other questions—that of Poland, or Alsace-Lorraine, for example, where the Russians, the Italians, as well as many of the French and British minority, might readily agree in their longing for peace with the German Social Democrats.

And, on the other hand, supposing that in the end a programme acceptable to all

Socialists should be drawn up, it is obvious that nothing could come of it so long as the German Socialists continued to support their Imperial Government, and that the latter, not having been vanquished, should maintain at least a part of its present exigencies.

On our return journey we met at Christiania a Norwegian pacifist, who had played an important part in the movement in favour of international arbitration.

He came from Vienna and Berlin. He had been interviewing Count Czernin, Zimmerman, Dernburg, and other politicians. According to him, the German rulers were, in July 1917, ready to treat on the following conditions: A simple rectification of the frontiers on the Courland side; the including of several kilometres west of Metz, France to keep the basin of the Briey; the transformation of Belgium, nominally independent, into "another Luxembourg," incorporated in the Zollverein and with Germany controlling her railways; suppression of Roumania, with Volhynia conferred on Austria and Moldavia on Russia.

Needless to say, even the neutral Italians or the Russian Extremists would hesitate to accept such a programme, and that if a general meeting took place the German Majority Socialists would not dare to put it forward.

But who does not realize that even to discuss with the latter, so long as they are allied with their Imperial Chancellor, would weaken the mainspring of the war and give to the nations, longing for peace, deceptive hopes, while embarking the Socialist International in an undertaking that might land it in confusion ?

It is true that the partisans, or at least certain partisans, of the Conference said to us, "There is no question of coming to an understanding with the German Majority Socialists ; we shall, on the contrary, go to Stockholm to ask the question of war responsibilities, to denounce the weakness, the compromise, the treachery even, of the Socialist Democratic Majority, to force them to choose between their Kaiser and Socialism, to break with their present policy or resign from the International. They must join with us, with all Socialists, against Imperi-

alism, or else stand alone, condemned by us, discredited completely in their own eyes and of the working classes, who up to the present have been faithful to them."

To speak frankly, there might have been something to say for such a view had the Russian Revolution, by a triumphant offensive, dissipated any idea of a peace from war weariness or weakness; if the neutrals on their side had had no other idea than to uphold the right and found peace on a basis of international justice; if, in the Allied countries, Socialists were unanimous, both as to the responsibility of the war and the conditions necessary for peace. But at the moment when the friends of the Russian Revolution are anxiously asking themselves not only if she *can*, but if she *will* defend herself, when in the last countries to remain neutral public opinion is almost entirely governed by a dread of being drawn into the war—when, in short, in the Allied countries, the Socialists seem further than ever from agreeing as regards a policy of war or peace, we do not hesitate to say that it would be worse than folly to expect a general Conference, where the

most contradictory views would meet in a confused *mêlée*, to become a Court of Justice and a Grand Jury.

Just after the Conference of the Socialists of the Allied countries in London (August 28, 1917), Arthur Henderson, whose great influence had some weeks before carried the decision of the Labour Party in favour of Stockholm, said in an interview :

" The inability of the inter-Allied Conference of last week to come to any even approximate agreement forces us to examine the whole situation anew.

" The International Conference, by reason of the great divergence of views that have been expressed in the inter-Allied Conference, would be not merely harmful, but disastrous.

" We cannot meet in an International Conference so long as no common ground of understanding between the working classes of the Allied nations has been discovered."

Such has always been our own view, and it is in the first place for this reason that we have never ceased to exact for any reunion or reconstruction of the

International necessary and preliminary guarantees. These guarantees do not at present exist. A general Conference where those Socialists who are fighting for the freedom of Europe would have as their judges and arbitrators, among others, Sudekum, David, or Scheidemann, Italian neutralists, or Scandinavian pacifists, Maximalists from Petrograd, or Zimmerwald Extremists, would only give the world a lamentable spectacle of confusion and impotence. In the interests of the International, we could not wish such a thing.

It now only remains for us to conclude.

As we write, the Russian Revolution is passing through a crisis that may well prove fatal.

Riga is taken, Courland is conquered, the lines in the North are broken, and, what is infinitely more grave than the worst defeats, the question is being asked if the Revolutionary armies are still capable not of a great offensive, but simply of holding out against the attacks of the enemy.

Meanwhile, in the interior the authority of the Provisional Government is tottering.

The Soviets are discussing when they should be acting, party and class antagonisms are dominating the preoccupations of public safety, and in this immense country, where so many nationalities meet, one looks in vain for any signs of a national spirit.

We must expect in these conditions that in Paris, as in London, the Conservatives, who have been forced to keep silence during the first successes of the Revolution, should to-day open their mouths to judge and to condemn.

And, unfortunately for the cause even of the Entente, they are doing so with such bigoted views, such a petty manner of judging the Revolution only by its immediate military results, that their attacks risk influencing Western opinion against Russia and Russian opinion against the Allies.

Certainly one can understand that, at the news of reverses which defeated so many hopes, there should have been, among those who were counting on an early and victorious peace, feelings of anger and disillusionment.

But though disillusioned we should not

be unjust, and still less should we forget what would have inevitably happened had the Russian Revolution not taken place, had the Sturmers and the Soukhomlinoffs not been put beyond all possibility of doing harm, had the Czar's *régime*, in a word, not collapsed beneath the weight of its own mistakes, crimes, and treasons.

Let us suppose, indeed, that Nicholas II had remained on the throne: is there any one who doubts that peace would have been made to-day between the armies of the North—a separate peace and a disastrous one, which would have opened up the way for Germany to the richest granaries of Europe? And instead of Russian liberty having been in spite of everything a great encouragement to the efforts of liberation and the other nations, this peace would have been followed by new grouping, a new coalition arising against Western Democracies, the Triple Alliance of the Czars of Petrograd, Vienna, and Berlin.

Thanks to the Revolution, on the contrary, Russia remains part of the great alliance of nations against all that remains of autocracy in the world. She is fighting

for her liberty and for that of others, and though the difficulties that she has to contend with are serious, they are no greater than those of the French Revolution.

In the month of July last, when the armies of Brusiloff announced thirty-five thousand Austro-German prisoners, we thought of Valmy and Jemmappes.

Now, in September, which is opening so badly, why should we not remember, to give us fresh hope, those terrible days of 1793, when Belgium was evacuated, Revolutionary France invaded, Lyons in revolt, the English in Toulon, and La Vendée in open rebellion against the nation ?

The Convention none the less triumphed, and the Russian Revolution will surely triumph in its turn.

Between these two periods, it is true, we must remember there is one disquieting difference.

The defeats of the Revolution took place in France when the war was only beginning ; they have taken place in Russia after three years of a war which has ruined the finances of the country, thrown all its internal services into disorder, and created among the

mass of the people an irresistible longing for rest and peace.

But between these two periods also there is another difference, and this time to the advantage of the Russian Revolution. It is that France in 1793 had against her, if not the peoples, at least the Governments of all Europe, whilst Russia in 1917 has to sustain her and help her to triumph the Democracies of the whole world.

Certainly we are not among those who refuse to recognize the faults, weaknesses, and the sufferings of the Russian Revolution. On the surface she seems in a state of anarchy. That which existed is gone forever, what is to come is not yet in being. The whole fabric of the new *régime* remains to be manufactured, aggravated by the circumstance that they are at war.

But great as may be the difficulties and the perils of the present hour, they ought not to make us lose sight of the essential result. For the first time throughout the centuries of their history a nation of a hundred and eighty million souls is delivered from the most bloodstained, corrupt,

and brutal of tyrannies, and breathes at last the pure air of liberty.

And this liberty, so eagerly longed for, so dearly bought by the martyrdom of thousands of martyrs, is such a conquest, such a great boon and blessing, that it were to despair of all human nature not to believe that to defend it the Russian nation will make just such an effort as was made in 1793 by the people of France.

We cannot too often draw attention, indeed, to the similarity between these two periods. With this outstanding difference, that the Russian Revolution is hastening headlong forward, and counting in weeks and days instead of in years.

That is what we said on the evening of our departure in our last conversation with Kerensky, Teretscko, Prince Lvoff, and other members of the Provisional Government.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs received us in one of the ministerial palaces on the bank of the Neva. It was eleven o'clock at night, but the sky on this beautiful June night was still red with the last rays of the setting sun. Opposite, across the

river, we could see the fortress of Peter and Paul, with the red flag flying from the ramparts. Sturmer, Protopopoff, Soukhomlinoff, the dethroned ministers, were there awaiting judgment. On our balcony, on the contrary, were those men, ministers to-day, who four months before had been prisoners over there. An amazing turning of the tables! Those who had lived in the palace in prison, while the men who had spent years in prison were now installed in the palace. And at the same time others—Tseretelli, for example—were coming back from Siberia, while the Czar was on his way to that land of exile.

Need we be astonished that after such an upheaval, such a turning of the tables both socially and politically, the disorder of these early days should have allowed the enemy to gain certain advantages and to profit from the inevitable disorder following on the Revolution? On the contrary, the astonishing part is that his gains have not been greater, his action more decisive. He has delayed and hesitated. He has miscounted once again his adversaries' capabilities, and left the

Russian nation precious time in which to recover her force—time that surely she will know how to profit by.

And if this is so, what matter the defeats, the trials, the disasters even, which accompany, as they always have accompanied, great revolutions? Russian liberty is still fighting tooth and nail for its very existence. Russia must at one and the same time defend herself against the menaces of absolute authority, the perils of anarchy, and the ravages of invasion. At first glance, the Revolution seems to have engendered only chaos. So be it; but do not let us forget the words of Nietzsche, "There must be chaos, that out of chaos may come forth new stars. There must be chaos, that new worlds may be born."

APPENDIX

The Memorandum of the Belgian Socialists submitted to the Dutch-Scandinavian Commission.

THE Dutch-Scandinavian Commission received on Saturday, June 30th, the Belgian Delegation, composed of citizen Emile Vandervelde, President of the International Socialist Bureau, and Louis de Brouckère, Assistant delegate to the International Socialist Bureau, both of them members of the General Council of the Belgian Labour Party.

The Delegation submitted their opinions in the following Memorandum:—

Open up before dealing with peace conditions the problem of to-morrow; we wish to recall our point of view with regard to the War, the problem of to-day.

It seems to us less a war between nations

than a, probably decisive, struggle between two political principles. It is in this sense that it has justly been called a civil war in the Society of Nations.

This true nature of the great conflict was evident from its very beginning, and it becomes more evident every day.

Democracy Defends Its Cause.

The Russian Revolution, of which this War has been if not the fundamental reason at least the opportunity for the United States to come in.

America has had recourse to force of arms, only after having exhausted all the means of ending this great quarrel peacefully. She has definitely ranged herself now on the side of all free nations, that is to say, those having already accomplished their democratic revolution. On the other side, almost entirely isolated, are the last three semi-feudal, semi-absolute Powers, that of the Emperor of Germany, the sovereign of Austria-Hungary, and of the Great Turk.

Against this triple force of oppression

and reaction, whose triumph, or simply whose maintenance, would threaten the world with an unbearable slavery, would crush all hope, all possibility of the political development of the proletariat, democracy is fighting.

No one could seriously contest that this War on the part of the Allied Powers is not both a War of Defence and Liberation. Certainly we admit, unanimously with the Allied Socialists represented at the Conference of London in 1915, that all Capitalist Governments have in this present conflict their share of the responsibility. But we state with this assembly that on the rulers of the Central Powers, and on them alone, lies the direct, immediate responsibility of the conflict.

The Responsibilities of the War.

International Capitalist Imperialism has created economic and political conditions which have rendered the catastrophe possible, but it is the reactionary military Imperialism of the Central Powers that has used these circumstances to attempt universal

hegemony, and who, conscientiously and deliberately carrying out a plan long since matured, have let loose this War on the vilest pretext and for the most miserable cause. They have been able to put their designs into execution owing to the passivity of their people, a passivity inconceivable in any other country, in France, Great Britain, even in Russia of 1914, where already the forces of democracy were rising against the Czar, and would have certainly rebelled against so amazing an endeavour.

We shall dwell but an instant, and only to set it aside, on the objection that if the Central Powers are guilty of Imperialism the Allied Powers are not exempt either, that in France, Britain, or Italy a certain proportion of the population, certain interests, certain groups always aspire to veritable territorial conquests, either colonial economic gains or even European, we should not dream of denying, no more than we should allow plausible conclusions to be drawn from that fact.

It is only in the ideal land of dreams that causes appear with simplicity and theoretic purity. In the world in which

we live it is otherwise. Nothing is entirely exempt from some mixture of its opposite. But in politics, so in all other domains of action, we must find out the leading characteristics without dwelling on the exceptions.

France and Great Britain.

France of the Revolution, France whose effort to bring to triumph the cause of arbitration has been shown on every page of her International Annals, France who in August 1914 withdrew her troops to 10 kilometres from the frontiers and exposed her country to invasion to avoid even the appearance of provocation, is she less France because some financiers endeavoured to compromise her in Morocco?

Britain, who was arranging her naval vacations, who endeavoured with an energy and zeal unequal to the task to turn aside the catastrophe and find a juridicial solution to the conflict, is she less the old and strong democracy that has set so powerful an example to the world because a handful of landlords have

obstinately opposed themselves to her liberal traditions ?

The essential difference between the Central Powers and those of the Entente, that difference to which we have already alluded and to which we always return because it is the leading feature in the whole problem of the War, lies in the fact that while on our side a strong and active democracy exercising considerable political power, succeeds generally in holding in check Imperialist power, in keeping them at least within certain limits, the events of the three last years have shown, alas! but too clearly, that in the nations that are fighting against us democracy is powerless in the decisive hour, and so will she remain so long as deep and organic upheavals have not transformed the very constitution of their country.

We need not dwell on the evidence of this. If the responsibility of the German Empire in the present conflict were still to be established, if the side from which comes the Imperialist danger were still to be sought, Germany's own avowals would set at rest all further doubts.

We observe with joy the opinion of the German minority of Haase, Bernstein, and Kautsky is in this matter the same as our own, and we consider it our duty to express here our admiration of the courage with which they have expressed it.

From what we have just said come certain practical consequences, which we shall enumerate. And now we come to the kernel of our subject. In the first place Imperialism is nowhere reduced to complete impotence, a part of the ruling classes endeavour everywhere to lead governments to a policy of conquest, and from that comes the necessity of Socialists in all countries opposing energetically national Imperialism and preventing its imposing on the people its own War aims.

The Socialists of the Entente are also under these obligations. Their duty is to purify, as it were, this defensive War, to clear it of all desire for revenge, the abuse of power towards the vanquished, the extorted ransom, the lands placed under foreign rule against the will of the people, and they have never drawn back from this duty.

In what concerns the Belgian Socialists, the only ones of whom we are qualified to speak, it may be of use to recall here that they have fought and vanquished the annexationist danger that existed even in their own country in a certain measure, and that the Belgian Government is agreed on our programme of peace without conquest.

The special note added by Belgium to the reply of the Allies shows that this nation, which before the War aspired only to live at peace with her neighbours, has to-day no other aim in the War but the re-establishment of peace and justice, but that she wishes a peace that will assure to her country legitimate reparation and the guarantee of future security.

The present circumstances, and especially the Russian Revolution, which will be felt throughout the entire world, open up new possibilities in the struggle against Imperialism.

The Socialist Duty.

Everywhere Socialists can now act with more chances of success. We do not

hesitate to say that they owe it to themselves to take full advantage of this, not only by influencing the diverse Governments where they are represented, or by parliamentary influence, but by making a direct appeal to public opinion by influencing the masses dealing directly with the people themselves, and directed at this purification of war aims in which Russia has set us an example.

Having said this, we hasten to come back to what we consider at present an essential Socialist duty, that of defence against the aggression of German Imperialism, and against its attempt at universal hegemony. We Belgians have even been reproached with having defended ourselves. We shall not reply to that by quoting the resolutions of the International, which recognizes the right of national defence and recommends the creation of militia for that purpose. We should blush to reduce this argument to a mere interpretation of text. We shall only say that attack and invasion have made weigh upon us the most heavy of tyrannies, the German military tyranny, to which Bismarck assigned

as aim that the people should be left only their eyes to weep with. Belgian Socialism, which so often has risen against oppression within, was not likely to submit to oppression from without.

When they burned our villages, when they insulted our women, when they brutally suppressed our hardly-won liberties, how could we admit that this was a simple bourgeois quarrel which did not concern the working classes.

On the other hand, if they had given up the idea of fighting and protested that William II's soldiers were too numerous and his cannons powerful, they would have been dishonoured in their own eyes, cowardice never having been numbered among revolutionary virtues.

We must add that such renunciation was not even discussed. With their rifles and their strikes they have fought, and all the reports that come to us from our country are at one in stating that they will go on fighting whatever may be the sacrifices, however long may be the suffering, until this tyranny is vanquished.

The Sacred Union.

We have been reproached with having allied ourselves in this struggle with all classes of the people, with having achieved the sacred union. We do not dream of excusing ourselves. German aggression has created among all Belgian common interests since they are crushed beneath common yoke.

We are asked to think only of inter-class conflicts. Shall we do so amidst our ruined factories in a country where there is now scarcely any regular work? Shall our deported workmen lead such a cause?

To be able to take up again, otherwise than in mere words, the political struggle of our working classes, who does not see that we must have first a real national political life, that we must have regained our independence, nay, more, that we must have put it beyond the possibility of further attack.

We have been reproached with having behaved as the German majority did, because we also helped our Government in the continuance of this War. No dis-

tinction is drawn between the aggressor and the victim, and speeches are made on the technical difficulty of recognizing the real assailant. The failure of Bebel's thesis is proclaimed. We have no intention of stopping to discuss this mere verbiage.

To all clear consciences the fact of dealing a blow will always be distinct from the fact of parrying that blow. And, what, although the guilt of the German Government be not sufficiently established by the mere fact that they declared war, if other manifest proofs exist to show their criminal intention, their long premeditation and their methodical carrying out of their plan. All comparison between us—we who join with all the nation because she is attacked—and those who joined their Emperor to attack us seems to us an outrage, which we deeply resent and which makes any common understanding, any discussion even, impossible.

The defence against aggressive imperialism implies for us something more than the mere driving back of the invader from our frontiers. Now that the attack has been made we can no longer exist, the

world can no longer go on, under the perpetual threat of its recommencement. As long as in Berlin, Vienna, and Constantinople emperors, believing themselves to be invested with the Divine mission of governing the world, continue to dispose as they will of all the moral and material forces of their docile people, ready to follow them in all their enterprises, there can be no security for us, no social life possible, no hope of development nor of democratic progress. No treaty, whatever may be its terms, can give us the indispensable guarantee since we know from experience how enemy countries treat those scraps of paper.

Belgian Neutrality and Germany.

On the 2nd of August 1914 the German minister at Brussels solemnly declared that we should remain apart from this conflict, that it might be we should see our neighbour's house in flames, but our own roof would be spared. Some hours after he delivered the ultimatum giving us, as is known, but a few hours to reply. Almost immediately the invasion began, and

systematically they burned our towns and villages.

We cannot live henceforth in the perpetual dread of such horror happening again, and sleep at nights wondering if we shall waken to the clatter of the Uhlans' horses through our streets. Let them not tell us that the destruction of German Imperialism is the business of the Germans themselves. It could only be so if their Imperialism remained at home. To-day it has outstepped its limits and oppresses us. We are not disposed to let them work their will on us. We mean to break the power of our tyrant. We desire this as legitimately as the Russians for example, who resolved to break the power of their tyrant, and the fact that ours is seated in Berlin is not a sufficient reason to make us change our opinion.

Moreover, what we say of Belgium's decision in this matter applies to all the nations of the Entente.

The suppression of German Imperialism is obviously a world-wide necessity.

There is no Democratic development possible, there is notably no future for the

working classes other than in a durable peace, and the only durable peace conceivable lies in the development of international law, in the solution of conflicts by legal ruling, in the establishment of international institutions that will administer justice in this society of nations that the President of thc United States has announced amid the applause of the democracy of the world.

But how could nations engage in this worthily, how could thcy become useful parties to thc international contract if in the first place they are not masters of their own destinies, if they could not effectively control a Government responsible to them.

We insist on making quite clear, to avoid all possibility of a mistake, that the necessary struggle, in our opinion, is the struggle against German Imperialism, and not against the German people.

Whatever may have been our grief and indignation when we learned what the German people had become in this War, the servile executors of the will of their master, when we saw Socialists whom we had become accustomed to consider as

brothers taking their part, in our country, in the pillage and massacre, in the aggression and insult of our most cherished feelings, mocking at the credulity of internationalists who counted on their aid, we would not, all the same, for that reason hate the German people.

We ask no revenge against them, we do not wish, when our turn comes, to oppress them, we only wish to deliver them in delivering ourselves, to give them the right to dispose of themselves in the same way even as the Russian Revolution has done for the Russian people.

This right, obviously implying the deliverance from national despotism as from all foreign despotism, all project of dismemberment of Germany or Austria-Hungary, whether that territories really German be joined in spite of the wish of their inhabitants to some foreign Power, or that, on the contrary, existing empires be forced to divide themselves up into independent sovereignties, would find us immovably opposed. And even any economic league against Germany with the aim or the result of preventing the legitimate development of

her industry, all attempt to submit her to a contribution, or any action directed towards isolating her.

These precautions might be indispensable against the subjects of the Hohenzollern, obstinately resolved to bind themselves to their destinies and to serve them against humanity, but they are not conceivable, indeed they would bring about a revolt of the world's democracy if we attempted to apply them to a Germany liberated.

The Conditions of a Durable Peace.

Our conception of a peace comes from what we have just said of the manner in which we regard this War. We can conceive of no durable peace being possible while the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs keep their present power. If it were imposed on the world it would only lead to extension and reinforcement of tyranny, followed by a new war, whose preparation would absorb for a generation probably the living forces of the world, and would condemn it to the most terrible material, political, and moral stagnation.

The greatest danger of the present moment is the danger of the free countries giving way to war weariness and accepting a precarious peace, a peace which would not solve the vital problem that is before us.

We feel that we could not become a party to it without betraying in the deepest sense our Socialistic convictions.

As for peace with the peoples of the Central Powers, the day that they are delivered from their rulers, be it by their own effort or by ours, we have already stated our views on this subject to the Council of Workmen and Soldiers' deputies at Petrograd.

The Council of Workmen and Soldiers' deputies at Petrograd had drawn up in their appeal to the Socialists of all countries the essential conditions for a general peace. A peace without annexation or indemnities, on a basis of the right of all nations to dispose of themselves.

In the name of the Belgian Socialists who have deputed us to represent them abroad, we have declared that we associate ourselves unreservedly with the sense of democracy and justice which has inspired

this statement. We adhere to all its terms, but we desire to make clear the sense in which we understand them. Like all general formulæ, that of the Committee is possible of various interpretations, and it is important to avoid in exchanging views the misunderstanding that might result by using equivocal expressions.

No annexation. Annexation occurs when the belligerents by force and against the will of the inhabitants attach all or a part of the territories of their adversaries to the kingdom of their own sovereign. The classical example of this is the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by the German Empire.

If, conforming to the will of the inhabitants, this province were now returned to France, we see in that no annexation in the sense in which we have just defined it, we should, on the contrary, consider it a dis-annexation. Even the constitution of the Polish unity, the completion of Italian and Servian unity, desired by the population in question, would not have that character of violence or force which is characteristic of an annexation. These territorial changes would only serve

for the realization of legitimate national aims, conforming to all traditions of democracy and to the doctrine so often formulated of the International.

The Policy of Annexation.

Belgian Socialists have not waited till to-day to oppose strongly the policy of annexation. A small part of our Conservative Party has made a campaign in view of the complete victory of the Allies. Belgium receiving an important part of the German territory on the left bank of the Rhine, Aix-la-Chapelle, and even Cologne. Our annexationists would reclaim from Holland a part of Limburg, yielded to that country in 1839, and from Dutch Flanders which would give us access to the mouth of the Scheldt, and would thus assure in all time the free navigation of the river. By our efforts we have succeeded in deleting from the programme all claims of this description. Public documents declare it in which all the members of the Cabinet are engaged.

We shall content ourselves by referring

to the declaration added by Belgium to the general reply made by the Allies to President Wilson. There it is expressly stated that the nation which before the War only wished to live at peace with its neighbours has to-day no other aim than the establishment of peace and order. But that she insists on a peace which would assure the country legitimate reparation and the guarantee of future security.

The refusal of all annexation does not necessarily imply the maintenance of the territorial *statu quo*, we have already pointed out that the modification of frontiers seems legitimate to us when it conforms to the wishes of the inhabitants. With regard to Belgium we see two possible applications of this general principle.

There are in the neighbourhood of Stavelot several villages, at present attached to Prussia, which appear to wish to become Belgian again. The peace treaty would grant them their aspiration if this aspiration were clearly expressed.

In the same way the little state of Luxembourg, numbering hardly 200,000 inhabitants, provided that her return to

Belgium, from which she was detached, would give her more advantages than she could hope for in a separate existence; we believe that we shall be able to welcome her as part of Belgium did she freely attach herself.

Reparations.

No contributions. We mean by contributions an indemnity such as that which Bismarck exacted in 1871 from vanquished France, or that which Germany imposes continually in occupied Belgium. This contribution is like a tax levied on the weakest. It is one of the most cynical applications of the doctrine that might is right. Needless to say that, as strongly as the Workmen and Soldiers' Committee, we object to such an idea. But just because we do object so strongly we can only admit a peace treaty which would in some way sanction contributions levied by the invader during the war being repaid.

This question has a special interest for Belgium—let us say without exaggeration a vital interest; for if we do not

arrive at an equitable solution of this problem the greater part of our working-class population will be condemned for long years to suffering, poverty, and lack of work, from which their only escape would be emigration *en masse*.

German authority has by threats and violence exacted from our towns the payment of several millions in money since the beginning of the German occupation. They requisition, moreover, for the needs of the army a monthly contribution of fifty millions in corn, and that has been increased to sixty millions. They have seized several millions in raw food material and machinery. They have carried out much destruction for military operations: in many cases this was simply to terrorize the population and assure for the future economic advantage by suppressing a troublesome competition.

The Belgian nation must indemnify the victims of all such violence, and this charge will be added to those which we have enumerated.

It would be the height of injustice to allow the victim of this oppression to bear

the burden of repaying it. It might even lead to the risk of her succumbing beneath the burden.

Surely in common justice the author of the ill-doing should repair what wrong he has done, in so far as it is reparable.

On October 4, 1914, the Chancellor admitted in the Reichstag that Germany had violated the neutrality of Belgium, and that she owed her reparation. We are firmly convinced that Russian democracy will not admit less than did the representative of the Kaiser, and will recognize in this matter the obvious rights of an oppressed nation.

Rights of Nations to Dispose of Themselves.

According to us, this right implies that nations shall have no foreign rulers, and that they cannot be placed against their will under a selected sovereignty. The principle proclaimed by the Soviet is opposed by its former conception of the territorial *statu quo*, to which the Holy Alliance had brought its influence to

bear, to that which bound once for all every province to a State, or rather placed it in the domain of a sovereign. Any change made was considered as infringing the divine right on which the sovereignty was founded, but to-day, when the Constitution is based on the naturally variable will of the people, the right of populations to change their rulers seems no less essential than their right to retain them. It would be as tyrannical to maintain against their will in the Hungarian or Austrian State, Bosnia or Bohemia or Transylvania, which aspired to other national destinies, as it would be to attach by force to the German Empire Belgium, which has an invincible repugnance to abandon her independent existence.

The right of nations to dispose of themselves implied no less surely that they shall have no masters in their own countries either. It was only a misleading verbalism, for example, when one spoke of the right of Russia to dispose of herself before the Revolution, since the Czar could dispose of the Empire. In the same way we cannot honestly say that Germany

disposes of herself as long as the semi-absolutism of the Hohenzollern exists. This seems to us essential. We consider the Democratic Constitution of Germany not only as a right that she can claim, but as a condition to which other nations have the right to subordinate their adhesion to a general peace.

We can certainly trust ourselves to an agreement signed in the name of a people having the will and the power to guide their own destinies, but we can consider only as another scrap of paper a treaty which would be guaranteed only by an Emperor accustomed to hold lightly his given word, and having, as in the past, the power to lead a docile nation where he chose.

We do not hesitate to add that this necessity for liberty *à interio*, without which the world can know no durable peace, is necessary. What we have just said can be applied elsewhere than to Germany. A Democratic Constitution should be brought into being everywhere, developed or consolidated, so that nations can at last associate them-

selves in the same international justice. Our views on this point are in entire accordance with those which citizen MacDonald expressed in a letter to one of ourselves, a letter which has since been made public.

This opinion had, moreover, been forcibly expressed in the manifesto of President Wilson, and all the Socialist democracies of the allied countries find in it an echo of their own views. We believe that even on this point the opinion of our Russian friends will be the same as our own, and that if they have not expressly mentioned the Democratic Constitution of States and the establishment of a Society of Nations in the programme that they submitted to the working classes of the whole world, it is because they have considered both as implicitly understood in the right of nations to dispose of their own destinies.

Against Imperialism.

We shall rejoice unreservedly if it is permitted us to see in all countries, in those governed by the coalition of

Emperors as in those of the Entente, the energetic action of the working class against Imperialism carried out on the lines of the programme that the Workmen and Soldiers' Council has formulated, and of which we have endeavoured to explain the exact bearing in the first part of the memorandum. We wish to state also that, in what concerns the Belgian Socialists, they have not for one day ceased fighting against the policy of aggression and conquest. We have been accused of having sacrificed ourselves to Imperialism because we have defended our independence and our national liberty, in combination with all classes in our country, because one of us has accepted a place in the Committee of Public Safety in the Government of Havre. It is not the Russian Socialists, placed since the Revolution in the same difficult circumstances, and who have been led by these circumstances themselves to like solutions, who will echo these calumnies. They understand, as we did, that the duty of defending liberty against foreign tyranny is as sacred a duty as to defend it within our own country.

But though we do not deny our former conduct, though we proudly affirm that our Party and ourselves have fulfilled in this matter our duty as Socialists, we hasten to state, and we state it gladly, that the Russian Revolution has created new conditions which allow of an added intensity and a greater influence being brought to bear on anti-imperialistic action.

Free Russia has just revised and purified her war aims. The moment seems to have come when the Allied Socialist Parties can with more authority and more hope of success than in the days of Czardom demand that their respective Governments do the same.

To the diplomatic step which the Provisional Russian Government has just inaugurated in this respect can and ought to be added the political influence of the Socialist Party, not only influence with ministers and rulers, not only parliamentary influence, but influence on public opinion, on the opinion of the masses.

In this necessary, positive, immediate action we are ready to collaborate with all our strength.

It is by this that can be manifested in full publicity and open daylight the community of thought and action of the working classes, and the International can be reconstituted as something more than the mere reunion of Committees.

Reconstruction of the International.

We are firmly convinced that the International must be reconstructed from its very foundation; that the action of the masses must precede any action of the congress; which can only bear fruit if it has the support of the people. It is sufficient to say that we could not agree in the present circumstances to the suggestion of a general conference to which would be admitted unconditionally all the parties and bodies affiliated to the Socialist International Bureau.

A plenary assembly, to which would be admitted those who support the present policy of the Socialist majority of the Central Empires, appears to us both useless and dangerous—useless because such an association of contrary opinions could

produce no action. Now, to our great grief, events have constantly shown us since the beginning of the war that the Socialist majority of the Central Empires, or at least the leaders who speak in their name, the only ones that we could meet in conference, are opposed to us in thought and action.

They attached themselves from the very first day to that aggression of which we have been the victims. They have not ceased to uphold it, and they are still upholding it.

It is with their complicity, with the help that they give their Emperor, that our country is invaded and that our comrades suffer.

We are fighting for our liberty and for the defence of universal democracy.

They are supporting against the Union of Democratic Nations the military effort of the last semi-absolute monarchs. They are even supporting it against the first effort of German democracy.

It is they who foresee and who fight against the revolt against the Hohenzollern.

What purpose could a meeting of them

and ourselves serve, in what could it end, other than some equivocal resolution, whose skilfully veiled phrases should hide the lack of unanimity ?

We believe that it is frankness rather than diplomatic skill that the international working class has need of at present.

If an assembly in such conditions seemed simply useless, we might still give in to it in deference to our comrades. But we consider it dangerous for the cause of democracy, and even for the cause of the International itself. That is why we insist. It is dangerous because it is misleading ; because it obscures the situation ; because it holds out the illusion that a just and durable peace is possible before Imperialism has been destroyed ; because, finally, in holding out the false hope of an equitable and early solution it weakens energy and favours that drifting of weak wills towards peace at any price. We who aspire to peace only with liberty cannot associate ourselves with what might favour a German peace, under the hegemony of the King of Prussia.

We wish it to be clearly understood

that we do not refuse to meet the German people, but to associate ourselves with the supporters of the Imperialism of William and Charles.

German Socialists.

We see no objection to join in common action with those who, in the Central Empires, are opposed to a policy of aggression and conquest, and have the same aims as ourselves. We would not refuse to meet the Majority Socialists if, renouncing their present errors, they openly and bravely took part against their Emperors. That is why we have asked the French and British delegations not to admit to the proposed Conference all the parties and bodies affiliated to the International, but to make a condition of admission that each group shall give its adherence to an anti-Imperialist programme which would serve as the basis of the deliberations.

The Soviet, in a spirit of conciliation, has agreed in a measure to this request, declaring that only those would be authorized to take part in the Conference who

would accept the principles of peace formulated by the C.O.S.

Unfortunately, the formula of the Soviet admits of extremely different interpretations. Obviously, before being of use for this Conference its sense ought to be clear. Without that there would be a regrettable misunderstanding, as the basis of our work and the whole object for which new Russia calls the International would be affected by it.

The essential, vital point which remains to be discussed is to know by what procedure one could fix this common interpretation, which would then be imposed on all the participants and prevent these which are separated from us by a moral abyss, as well as by a political abyss, from changing the aims of our meeting and making it serve for the execution of projects conceived in the Government circles of Berlin and Vienna.

Three methods immediately present themselves to our minds. The first would consist of making clear the reading of the formula of the Soviet. Each party would then have to decide if it would accept it.

But the Soviet does not seem to desire to do this. It seems, we believe, not to have the power to decide alone a question which has an international bearing. And we can only appreciate these scruples.

The Exchange of Views of Stockholm.

The second is that which the organizers of the Stockholm Conference have already adopted; to obtain an exchange of different views between the convening authorities and the different international sections of their bodies. All would thus be able to state their views and their intentions. Many misunderstandings arising from the rarity of personal contact since the War between the militants of different countries would disappear, and perhaps it would end by certain general opinions standing out which might thus serve as a basis for the convocation of a General Conference of anti-Imperialist Socialists.

We add that in our mind this exchange of views can only be of service if care be taken to remove from it all character of secret diplomacy. There must be no

question of some militants, more or less delegates, discussing together in the twilight of private meetings and replacing in the debate the working classes—the party interested. They must speak in the name of their working classes, give their views consciously, clearly, honestly expressed. In other words, the first condition of all useful debate is, in all the countries taking part, this action of the masses that we have tried to make clear above. It only, moreover, can guaranteee the sincerity of engagements. These alone count in our eyes that can be interpreted by acts, and, after the terrible experience we have had we cannot reasonably be asked to accept any other.

In short, we ask that in all countries Socialists should carry on a campaign and produce a general public movement, a movement on the part of the masses to bring the Governments to give up all War aim of an Imperialist character and to accept the peace formula of the Soviet explained and made clear.

We accept the idea of an exchange of views analogous to that of the Dutch-

Scandanavian Committee of Stockholm, the exchange of views based on the action of which we have spoken in the previous paragraph.

We believe that under these conditions great results could be achieved.

The General Conference.

Lastly, we believe that these preliminaries might lead to the drawing up of a programme for a General Conference sufficiently definite to prevent any misunderstandings, and to discourage all diplomatic manœuvres of our adversaries, and to keep away those nominally Socialist bodies who would not decide to co-operate sincerely in the anti-Imperialist cause to which the International would convene them.

And we wish to state clearly that as soon as these conditions are fulfilled Belgian Socialists will be glad to attend such a plenary assembly, which would then be the real International.

Before closing, we would say a word on one of the questions submitted in the sheet

which we have received from the Dutch-Scandinavian Committee, the Flemish question.

The Independence of Belgium.

With regard to Belgium, we are bound to state that there is a very big difference between the constant assurances that we are given on the subject of the political independence of the country, and the manner in which the occupant administers it and insists on changing the fundamental institutions.

If Germany's intention is to evacuate Belgium and to respect her independence, we cannot understand why she is carrying out a policy which can only be explained by her desire to remain. It is notably in such a spirit that she is trying to exploit the Flemish question, to set the Flemish and the Walloons against each other, and so demoralize the nation.

The Flemish people, as much as the Walloons, wish to remain Belgian, in an independent Belgium. They do not dream of accepting from the hands of the

enemy occupying their land reforms in the German interest.

They intend the necessary linguistic changes to be accomplished by the Belgian Parliament, and to be the expression of the collective will of the nation.

Signed { EMILE VANDERVELDE.
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